



A RAND NOTE

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West German NATO Policy:  
The Next Five Years

Ronald D. Asmus

November 1989

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This Note assesses future West German attitudes toward NATO and the factors that are likely to shape them into the mid-1990s. As the 1980s come to a close, changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe confront the NATO alliance with a host of new challenges, while the Soviet threat appears to be dissipating. This Note provides a guide for understanding the West German security debate. It also highlights and explains four changes that have taken place in the West German security debate in the 1980s. These changes have made it difficult to maintain the balance between preserving Bonn's strong Western ties and attenuating the costs of national partition and improving West Germany's ties with the East. Finally, it links domestic trends and their effect upon West German security thinking with the broader evolution in East-West relations in Europe.

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The Next Five Years**

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**Prepared for the  
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## PREFACE

This is one of a series of seven RAND Notes sponsored by the United States Air Force, Europe (USAFE). The work was undertaken in the National Security Strategies Program within Project AIR FORCE. Since the issues of maintaining NATO deterrence are as political as they are military, it was decided to analyze the potential alternative short-run NATO policies of major member nations. These Notes were written independently; they were then discussed at a meeting that examined the implications of each national policy for the others. The resulting synthesis will be set forth in a future report. The Notes themselves, although refined as a result of both the meeting and the passage of time, are essentially independent; each one makes alternative assumptions about other NATO partners rather than predicated its analysis on specifics from the other Notes in this group, which are forthcoming.

## SUMMARY

This Note assesses future West German attitudes toward NATO and the factors that are likely to shape them. The time-frame chosen is the next five years—a period that extends beyond the short-term horizon of a decisionmaker preoccupied with operational issues but not so far off into the future as to become irrelevant for policy. Such a time-frame allows us to try to project future trends within the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and how they might mesh with broader changes underway in Europe. As the 1980s come to a close, changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe confront the alliance with a host of new challenges as the Soviet threat is seen as dissipating. With growing West European political and economic integration and large budget deficits in the United States, such changes in the East have only reinforced an ongoing debate in the West over the future of the alliance and West European-American relations.

The crucial role of the FRG in the future of the Western alliance results in large part from geography. Germany's position in the heart of Europe has historically made it the key to influencing and controlling the continent. Furthermore, much of NATO political and military strategy has been guided by assumptions concerning West German political and military needs. As a result, a shift in the FRG's political orientation, or a redefinition of West German political and military needs, promises to have major ramifications for the Western alliance and the type of strategy it embraces.

This Note has three goals: First, it provides a guide or road map for understanding the West German security debate. Part of this road map is objective and analytical, and describes the types of security dilemmas facing Bonn resulting from geography, national division, and the FRG's nonnuclear status. Part of it is subjective, however, and requires an understanding of the effect of past German history on West German attitudes toward defense, strategy, and the use of military instruments for national purpose.

West German foreign and security policy has always consisted of a balancing act between preserving Bonn's strong Western ties and attenuating the costs of national partition and improving the FRG's ties with the East, above all the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The second goal is to highlight and explain four changes that have taken place in the West German security debate in the 1980s that have made the maintenance of this balance more difficult.

- The collapse of the security consensus in the FRG in the early 1980s under the weight of the INF debate.
- Falling perceptions of the Soviet threat and a corresponding drop in societal willingness to continue to bear the burden that existing NATO strategy imposes on the FRG.
- Generational change and the rise of a more assertive and self-confident "successor generation" seeking to define a more autonomous foreign policy stance.
- Changes in the traditional political landscape resulting from a drop in the appeal of the major parties and the rise of radical parties on both ends of the political spectrum.

The third goal is to link these domestic trends and their effect upon West German security thinking with the broader evolution in East-West relations in Europe. In this context, four alternative scenarios are presented for the future evolution of East-West relations on the continent to highlight how West German domestic politics may mesh and, in turn, be influenced by broader international currents.

Speculation over West German fidelity to the Western alliance, an alleged drift to the East, or some new premium on reunification is exaggerated and misguided. A survey of the postwar period rapidly reveals a remarkable track record of continuity, predictability, and reliability. West German statesmen have always made it clear that their priorities lie in the West, and they have traditionally maintained a keen sense of self-imposed limits and remained sensitive to the concerns of their neighbors. The Federal Republic is not experiencing a major debate over West German membership in NATO. Indeed, much of the harsh criticism of the alliance that emerged in the early 1980s in the peace movement has dissipated as East-West relations have improved.

The result of the changes of recent years in the FRG has not been West German alienation from NATO per se, but there is a gap between widespread support for the Western alliance in principle and estrangement from core components of NATO military strategy. Although most visible in the nuclear realm, signs of a growing unwillingness to maintain the burdens imposed by current strategy are also appearing in the conventional realm and there is opposition to low-level flights, maneuvers, and calls for deep cuts in conventional forces stationed in the FRG. With the prospect of an agreement at the talks

on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) in Vienna on the horizon and public expectations for deep cuts on the rise, above all in West Germany, the alliance may soon be confronted with a new debate over post-CFE requirements and the future of forward defense.

West German politicians are divided among themselves on how to respond to the contradiction between overall support for the alliance and increasing estrangement from actual alliance strategy. The current conservative-liberal coalition has sought to use Bonn's political and military weight within the alliance to bring NATO policy into line with public sentiments while limiting its demands to *cuts in existing force structures* without calling either the nuclear or conventional components of NATO strategy openly into question. The opposition, however, has openly called for far-reaching changes in nuclear and conventional forces that would compel revisions in alliance strategy.

The question at the heart of the current West German security debate is whether existing NATO military strategy is in need of revision in light of the changes currently taking place in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and in light of the growing reluctance of the West German population to sustain the heavy political, economic, and psychological burden that existing NATO strategy requires. At what point will domestic pressures for reductions be placated? At what level and mix of nuclear and conventional forces can a new and durable political equilibrium be reached? Can the domestic requirements of German politics can be synchronized with the views of its Western allies and the pace of East-West arms control negotiations?

Current trends in East-West relations in Europe are increasingly going to confront Bonn with sensitive questions concerning German national aspirations. At the moment, the West German security policy debate is a debate over how far the alliance can or should reduce its forces in response to Soviet initiatives and whether the alliance should alter its own strategy in response to changes in the East. The prospects of far-reaching change in Eastern Europe raise delicate issues concerning the future of the German Question and the relationship between the two German states. The prospect of political liberalization, economic reform, and a reawakening of national consciousness and civil society spilling over into the GDR could prove to be a vital test of that communist regime's legitimacy and survivability.

A simple projection of existing trends in East-West relations, as well as the current course of reform in Eastern Europe, shows that the Germans, as well as their neighbors,

are likely to be confronted with some basic questions concerning their national aspirations and exactly what type of change Bonn aspires to in Central Europe. Progress in arms control, along with the current pace of reform and liberalization in Eastern Europe, raise important questions concerning the future of the GDR and the relationship between the two German states. Although the willingness of regimes in the East and the West to move further down the path of arms control will hinge upon a number of factors, their views on the political ramifications of such changes, their assessment of German national aspirations, and their willingness to sanction increased German influence in Central Europe will be factors of growing importance in this calculus.

Against this background Bonn's call for a comprehensive concept for the alliance amounts to a plea for assistance in clarifying such questions and in seeking to establish a new domestic consensus that will enable it to take advantage of the opportunities arising from changes currently taking place in the East. How Bonn is going to walk the fine line between exploring new opportunities and guarding against the risks inherent in the multiple pressures for change will hinge on how well its views mesh with the policies pursued by its Western allies and the Soviet Union.

## CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	iii
SUMMARY .....	v
Section	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. BONN'S SECURITY DILEMMAS: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE .....	6
III. MAINTAINING (AND KEEPING) A BALANCE .....	18
IV. A POLITICAL LINEUP .....	27
CDU/CSU .....	27
FDP .....	34
SPD .....	37
The Greens .....	41
The Republicans .....	43
V. ALTERNATIVE GERMAN FUTURES .....	45
Successful Alliance Management .....	45
Unsuccessful Alliance Management .....	47
Constructive Disengagement .....	48
Destructive Disengagement .....	50
VI. PROSPECTS .....	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	63

## I. INTRODUCTION

Debates on "Quo vadis NATO?" are perennial. Looking back over the past four decades, one might easily conclude that the history of the Atlantic Alliance is a history of its crises. At the same time, it is a story of crises successfully managed and overcome. No member of the alliance has ever defected, or even threatened to defect. Indeed, with the addition of Spain in the alliance's 35th year, NATO has continued to expand. In the annals of the modern state system the security relationship between Western Europe and the United States stands out as perhaps the longest lasting alliance of free nations.

Such historical observations should serve as a useful reminder when one is seeking to sort out current tensions within the alliance, their origins, and their longer-term implications. It would nevertheless be premature to dismiss current differences in the alliance as a replay of the historically familiar, simply another quarrel that will subside in due time. The current tensions within the alliance are unique because they result from an unprecedented constellation of forces pushing for change in East-West relations in Europe.

Undoubtedly the primary impetus for change stems from the Soviet Union and the ramifications of Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to reform Soviet domestic and foreign policy. The advent of Mikhail Gorbachev has been accompanied by a string of changes in past Soviet foreign and security policy. Under the rubric of new thinking, Moscow has not only taken steps to terminate Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and made concessions to Western arms control positions, it has also held out a much more ambitious vision of a radically transformed, more cooperative, demilitarized, and denuclearized East-West relationship. Furthermore, such changes in Soviet external policy have been accompanied by a far-reaching process of domestic reform and liberalization that has introduced a series of remarkable changes and an unprecedented degree of transparency in Soviet domestic politics.

The fact that Soviet domestic and foreign policy is undergoing the most important reappraisal since the early days of the Bolshevik Revolution has confronted NATO with a series of difficult questions on how to respond to Soviet initiatives, select the appropriate criteria for assessing change in the USSR, and coordinate and calibrate an effective Western reaction. Above and beyond such operational questions, the alliance

must also seek to define a new consensus over future Western political and military strategy as well as its own longer-term goals for the future of Europe.

Stirrings of change are also evident in Eastern Europe, where aging and divided communist party leaderships struggle to cope with economic decline, accelerating demands for political liberalization and a reawakening of civil society and national consciousness. In Poland and Hungary, the reform process has already gone beyond the types of changes witnessed in Czechoslovakia in 1968 that catalyzed a Soviet-led military intervention. While the Gorbachev leadership has signaled its willingness to grant its East European allies an unprecedented degree of leeway in managing their internal affairs, the ability of these regimes to simultaneously steer their countries in a more pluralistic direction domestically without undermining the cohesion of the Warsaw Pact is open to question. Soviet proclamations that Moscow has disavowed the Brezhnev Doctrine notwithstanding, it would be rash to assume that Gorbachev will preside over the dissolution of the Soviet empire; a potentially fermenting Eastern Europe remains Gorbachev's Achilles' heel.

Soviet domination of Eastern Europe was one of the core causes of the Cold War. Soviet willingness to allow liberalization and national self-determination will inevitably be seen in the West as a litmus test of Gorbachev's sincerity in moving toward a more cooperative and demilitarized East-West relationship. Moreover, Western security concerns in Europe have always been linked to the fact that Soviet domination of Eastern Europe allowed Moscow to deploy its forces forward and simultaneously granted it control over the historical invasion corridors into Central and Western Europe. Greater autonomy and national independence for Eastern Europe will constrain Soviet ability to exploit those forces and therefore lies in the basic political and military interests of the West.

Finally, changes are taking place in Western Europe and in the trans-Atlantic relationship. In the United States, sustained budget deficits, the growing importance of the Pacific-rim countries in American foreign policy, and popularized theories of imperial decline have combined to give a new boost to an old debate over the future of the American commitment to European defense. Signs of change are also evident in Western Europe. A new push toward political and economic integration symbolized by 1992 and the Single European Act has reignited enthusiasm and hopes that Europe may yet achieve greater cohesion and a more autonomous voice in East-West and international affairs.

In the East, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies are faced with a systemic crisis that has compelled a rethinking of past domestic and foreign policy. The correlation of forces between capitalism and socialism, to use the Soviet vernacular, are shifting in favor of the West because the socialist countries cannot compete in terms of political, economic, and technological performance. In the West, a democratic alliance of prosperous and internally stable countries finds itself confronted with the price of secular success as a deeply rooted sense of security has pushed the benefits of alliance into the background and instead focused attention on its burdens.

The net result of such heterogeneous yet reinforcing pressures for change has nevertheless been a growing sense in both halves of the continent that the Cold War in Europe is drawing to a close and that the structures upon which European security have previously been based may be in need of revision. Prospects of a reduced Soviet military threat on the continent and Soviet proclamations on the need to construct a common European home have encouraged hopes that a more unified Europe could assume a new and more autonomous role in a multipolar international system. Much of the enthusiasm that Gorbachev has aroused in Western Europe is linked to the hope that a reduced Soviet threat would simultaneously ease the transition to a restructured Western alliance with a reduced American role and greater West European autonomy.

Any attempt to contemplate the future of the Western alliance and NATO's strategy for dealing with a world after the Cold War reveals that one country will occupy center stage in any attempt to redefine European security—the FRG. Germany's crucial position in the heart of Europe has always made it the key to dominating the politics of Europe. Moreover, important aspects of NATO's political and military strategy have been built around assumptions concerning West German political and military requirements. A shift in the FRG's political orientation, or even a redefinition of West German security needs, would inevitably have major implications for the Western alliance.

German power and influence are ascendant in both halves of Europe. The FRG has already achieved the rank of the leading economic power in Europe and ranks first in world exports of manufactured goods. West German industry is well situated to benefit from the Single European Act, and the Federal Republic is widely expected to solidify its position as the continent's economic hegemony in the 1990s. Similarly, the FRG is in many ways the only Western power with both the political will and the financial

resources to greatly expand its efforts in Eastern Europe at a time of waning Soviet influence.

Increased power has gone hand in hand with German assertiveness. The days when Willy Brandt described the FRG as an economic giant but a political dwarf are long past. Bonn has learned to translate economic clout into political influence, be it in the councils of the Common Market, NATO, or East-West forums. Such assertiveness is reinforced by generational change and the rise of the "successor generation"—solidly democratic, self-confident, and less inhibited in expressing "German interests." Convinced that they have long proven themselves to be loyal members of the Western alliance, they are taking their own critical look at the security alignments and policies adopted by their predecessors and asking whether those policies can or should be adapted to better suit German interests.

The combination of flux in East-West relations and growing West German influence and assertiveness have thrust the FRG into the forefront of an unfolding Western debate over how to respond to changes in the Soviet Union, whether existing NATO strategy should be updated in response to an altered Soviet threat and, if so, according to what criteria and in what direction. Much of current NATO strategy has been built around clear assumptions concerning German political and military needs. Although this is most apparent in the conventional realm and NATO's strategy of forward defense, much of the alliance's nuclear posture, including the deployment of shorter-range nuclear systems, can be understood only in the context of previous perceptions of German requirements for coupling. Shifts in German politics have the potential for major ramifications in terms of the way NATO plans to defend the Central Front.

Success in reducing both conventional and nuclear forces, as well as a general trend toward the demilitarization of the East-West competition in Europe, would automatically reduce the FRG's natural handicaps in East-West relations resulting from its status as a nonnuclear power on the East-West divide; they would simultaneously increase the importance of economic and technological power, areas that are German strengths.

The prospects of far-reaching liberalization and change in Eastern Europe are also likely to raise some touchy questions concerning longer-term German national aspirations. While the type of radical reforms visible in some Eastern European

countries have yet to affect the GDR visibly, East Berlin cannot indefinitely remain an island of orthodoxy in a sea of reform, liberalization, and renewed nationalism in East and Central Europe. Moreover, if pressures for change emerge in the GDR, they will almost inevitably spark a debate over the future relationship between the two German states. This will, in turn, have further repercussions in both the East and the West as both alliances struggle to come to grips with the future of the German Question. As a result, the willingness of regimes in the East and West to proceed down this path may hinge upon their assessment of German aspirations and their willingness to sanction increased German influence.

If Germans are waking up to the realities of growing influence, power, and opportunity, they are also divided among themselves on how best to respond. In the aftermath of the breakdown of the security consensus that had been a hallmark of West German politics since the early 1960s, deep differences in the German political elite remain over basic questions of NATO strategy, above all in the nuclear realm. More recently, another major element of uncertainty has been added with signs of the fracturing of the traditional West German political landscape and the rise of radical protest parties on both ends of the political spectrum.

This is a time of tremendous opportunity for the Federal Republic but also one of considerable risk. Bonn seeks to walk the fine line between adopting a more assertive role in the alliance that doesn't jeopardize its important Western bonds while exploiting changes in Eastern Europe and in the USSR for its own national interests.

Predicting future German attitudes toward the alliance against this background of divergent yet reinforcing pressures for change in both the East and the West is no easy task. Flux in East-West relations, growing German assertiveness, and shifts within the German political landscape all caution against any firm predictions. At the same time, evolving West German attitudes toward the future of the alliance and the type of political and military strategy it should pursue are becoming an increasingly important factor in the overall calculus determining European, and indeed U.S., security. It is therefore all the more important to try to understand what is currently driving the West German debate and those factors that are likely to determine its outcome. First, however, it is useful to take a brief look at the past.

## II. BONN'S SECURITY DILEMMAS: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

In 1989 the Federal Republic of Germany marked its 40th anniversary—a time-frame more than double that of the Weimar Republic and triple that of Hitler's "Thousand Year Reich." West Germans can look back over an impressive record of accomplishments. Not only have they achieved unprecedented levels of personal freedom and material prosperity, but also the longest period of peace in recent German history. Nevertheless, the FRG continues to face some unique dilemmas rooted in geography and history that have determined the country's security needs and have shaped West German attitudes toward NATO.

Bonn is faced with a special set of security problems resulting from its position as a frontline state, its status as part of a divided nation with half of its former capital located in the heart of the communist GDR, and its nonnuclear status. The exposed position of West Berlin and the need for allied presence for its protection is reinforced by the requirements of a credible posture of forward defense in light of the FRG's lack of strategic depth and its exposure to Soviet military power. So long as the Soviet Union dominates Eastern Europe it controls the potential invasion corridors of Western Europe. Similarly, Soviet force posture and military doctrine throughout most of the postwar period have been seen as exacerbating this vulnerability, thereby confronting Bonn with a set of defense dilemmas that can be resolved only in the context of a collective security alliance.

Given the role nuclear weapons have played in defining European security, and having renounced nuclear weapons, the FRG is handicapped as a geopolitical actor and destined to remain dependent upon its allies for nuclear protection. This dependence requires Bonn to seek very close relations with its nuclear protectors and to maximize its influence in capitals where decisions concerning its destiny would be made in a future East-West confrontation.

The FRG has always been the NATO country most directly exposed to Soviet power because of geography, most vulnerable to Eastern pressure because of Berlin, and most dependent upon its Western allies, above all the United States, for nuclear protection. Recognition of this exposed position led the FRG's first Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, to steer his country's foreign policy in a firm Western direction. Adenauer

was convinced from the outset that only the United States could provide the necessary counterweight to balance the geopolitical weight of the Soviet Union in Europe.

It was not only geopolitical calculations that drove Adenauer in a westward direction, however. For Adenauer, the institutions of Western Europe and the Atlantic Alliance offered the means to rehabilitate the Germans in the eyes of the West and to channel the country's energies into constructive purposes where they would simultaneously be held in check. Skeptical of his own countrymen's political maturity, Adenauer was convinced that this fledgling West Germany had to be unequivocally integrated into the West to secure its democratic moorings and to preempt any future temptations to balance or mediate between East and West that had been a hallmark of the Weimar Republic.

Adenauer's success in the early postwar period was due to his ability to assess the strategic dilemmas facing the FRG, his reading of East-West trends and growing American-Soviet confrontation, and his ability to use such trends to push for the rapid rehabilitation and integration of West Germany into a Western political, economic, and security framework. Yet Adenauer's tremendous success as a German politician was also attributable to his understanding of the psychological needs of his countrymen after the war, their yearning for physical and material security, their fear of communism and the Soviet Union, along with widespread apathy toward politics and little or no desire to play a major geopolitical role again. His political genius lay in his ability to integrate the FRG into a Western security system that provided the Federal Republic with physical security and a framework for consolidating German democracy. This security permitted the rebuilding of German strength while tempering latent fears among Germany's victors over a possible reassertion of German power.

The remarkable closeness of the German-American relationship in the postwar period and the West German embrace of the United States can be understood only against this backdrop. In the 1950s, it was not only American military power, above all nuclear weapons, that provided the necessary security umbrella for a West German democracy, it was also the American way of life that provided the alternative societal model to be emulated in a country with few indigenous democratic traditions and seeking to build a new political order. Rather than face the enormously difficult task of sorting out a new democratic German identity in the wake of two world wars and the Holocaust, many Germans sought a new identity in Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. The United

States assumed a mentor role for this West German democracy, and in many ways Germans came to see the United States as a surrogate fatherland, with an entire generation of aspiring German leaders coming to the United States to study and learn the American way of life.

In retrospect, this initial West German embrace of the United States was so total and unnatural that it was bound to loosen over time as the power relationships and the psychological needs of the two partners changed. In the strategic realm, the loss of American strategic invulnerability, the advent of mutually assured destruction, and the push toward flexible response in the 1950s and 1960s raised some touchy issues over the FRG's security dependence on Washington and the degree to which Bonn could or should rely upon American nuclear protection. The alternatives proved so difficult to organize in the form of a joint European nuclear force, or so unacceptable to others in the form of the prospect of German nuclear weapons, that the differences were enveloped in a revised NATO doctrine of flexible response coupled with renewed political assurances. They would subsequently reemerge in the late 1970s in a new INF drama again linked to growing Soviet nuclear capabilities, the implications this had for extended deterrence, and German fears over American reliability.

In societal terms, the West German embrace of the United States was also destined to loosen over time. West Germany became a stable and prosperous country and started to rediscover a sense of national self-confidence, and younger Germans started to define their own roots and postwar identity—an identity that had to be defined against the backdrop of an overwhelming American political, economic, and cultural presence. An idealized and often unrealistic image of the United States became tarnished as a result of Vietnam and Watergate. In the early 1980s the radical chic rejection of Reagan's America became prominent in the ranks of the peace movement as well as among German intellectuals and in the media.

Changing attitudes toward the United States, West German-American relations, and the desire to reduce Bonn's dependence upon Washington were not limited to the radical fringe, however. In many ways it would be Helmut Schmidt who best came to symbolize a Federal Republic more assertive in defining and defending its national interests with regard to the United States and aspiring to a more active role in East-West relations in Europe. Although Schmidt's Atlanticist credentials were impeccable, his sustained criticism of American leadership in the alliance and his efforts to lay claim to a

mediating role between the United States and Moscow at a time of superpower tension in the early 1980s became an apt symbol of the changing nature of the German-American relationship, the degree to which Bonn was starting to define its own national interest, and the yearnings for a more assertive and autonomous West German role in internal affairs and in the alliance.<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly an accident that West German frustration over the FRG's ongoing dependence upon the United States has most often crystallized on issues concerning alliance nuclear strategy. Nuclear weapons have not only defined relations between East and West in Europe, they also define the distribution of risk, power, and dependence within the alliance. This explains a great deal in terms of why antinuclear sentiment in the FRG rose so dramatically in the early 1980s and why it took on an anti-American tone, particularly on the left, fueled by a sense of frustration and impotence with regard to Washington and a widespread perception of disregard on the part of the Reagan administration toward special German interests. A similar process subsequently took place on the right in the wake of Reykjavik and the double zero option solution for INF. Confronted with shifts in American nuclear arms policy that they perceived as contrary to German interests, German conservatives lashed out at Washington, crying that a sellout of German national interests was taking place.

There have been periodic attempts in the FRG to rethink the basic premises upon which NATO strategy is based. In many ways, the FRG has been one of the cradles for alternative security thinking and past and current calls for various forms of disengagement in Central Europe. Such alternatives have historically never achieved a critical mass of credibility and public support because they failed to provide adequate answers to the structural security dilemmas facing Bonn regarding the FRG's exposed position to Soviet power, the status of Berlin, and its nonnuclear status. The realities of geography, German vulnerability, and a clear Soviet threat combined to forge a fairly secure consensus in the FRG on the basic elements of Western security policy for much of the postwar period.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Economist* once characterized Helmut Schmidt as an Anglophile because of his upbringing in the northern German port city of Hamburg, who became a professional Atlanticist as a politician, and would be transformed into a Francophile upon retirement. Schmidt's recollections of his years in power reflect both his deep and emotional attachment to the United States as a country and his equally deep conviction that Bonn's dependence upon Washington was unhealthy and must be replaced by a looser trans-Atlantic relationship with a more autonomous and unified Western Europe. See Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Maechte*, Siedler Verlag, West Berlin, 1987.

Bonn's security dilemmas represent only one-half of the equation determining the Federal Republic's foreign policy stance. A second structural security dilemma is uniquely German and rooted in national partition. Defense and security policy can never be viewed solely in terms of defending the FRG's territorial integrity or ensuring West German sovereignty and independence. Rather, policy must always be linked to dealing with German partition. Although Bonn's front-line status gives it a special interest in credible defense based on deterrence, no West German chancellor can accept a strategy aimed solely at defending the status quo in Europe but must instead seek to harness NATO policy to address the root causes of the division of Germany and Europe. As a result, the alliance is always faced with a constant tug or pull from Bonn to design a policy that maximizes the potential for progress in East-West rapprochement.

The Federal Republic was founded as a provisional state, and the West German Basic Law or constitution pledges Bonn to work for the goal of national unity and German self-determination. The founding fathers of the FRG, however, left behind no firm guidelines on the time-frame in which this goal should be achieved or operational advice as to what strategy to pursue. Over the years, West German governments have tried several different approaches for resolving the German Question.

In the 1950s, the FRG pursued a policy of nonrecognition termed the Hallstein Doctrine designed to keep the GDR isolated diplomatically and exposed to maximum political pressure. This was in many ways a West German variant of the American "rollback" policy pursued toward Eastern Europe during the same period. Both were based on the hope that relentless Western diplomatic pressure and ongoing internal instability would eventually compel Moscow to reconsider its security interests in the region and negotiate new political arrangements for these countries with the West. Adenauer's policy on the German Question proved unsuccessful for the same reasons American policy toward Eastern Europe failed: Both overestimated Western leverage and underestimated Soviet determination to guarantee their security interests through the maintenance of control over Eastern Europe, including the GDR.

If the Hungarian uprising of 1956 underlined the failure of U.S. policy, the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 proved to be a symbolic defeat of Adenauer's policy of strength. Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* represented a strategic reversal in West German thinking on the German Question. Whereas Adenauer had sought to bring about change in the GDR through relentless external pressure, Brandt's policies were consciously

designed to reduce the threat that West German policy was seen as posing in order to help facilitate change from within. Bonn not only agreed to recognize the existence of two German states but actively sought to facilitate internal reform by expanding political and economic cooperation between the two states. Adenauer was viscerally opposed to detente and arms control in the 1950s and early 1960s because he saw such steps as consolidating the status quo in Central Europe and undercutting his position on the German Question, but the architects of Social Democratic *Ostpolitik* viewed detente and arms control as a midwife for political reform in Eastern Europe.

West German *Ostpolitik* was designed, first and foremost, to ease the costs of German partition and to maintain what Willy Brandt termed the "substance" of the German nation. In operational terms, this meant seeking to make a divided Germany more tolerable through increased travel and economic support for the Germans in the GDR. West German policymakers have insisted that they were not foreclosing any future options on the German Question, but they are no longer wedded to the idea of a reunified German state; and various solutions to the German Question based on the acceptance of the existence of two German states have been contemplated over the years.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one of the crucial changes that has taken place in the FRG since the early 1970s has been the growing support for the view that the core of the German Question is political, not territorial—i.e., that West German policy must be geared toward making living conditions in the GDR acceptable to the Germans living there, thereby making two German states acceptable to Germans in East and West.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Adenauer revealed in his memoirs that he had secretly proposed to the Soviet leadership a solution to the German Question in which Bonn accepted the existence of two German states in return for the so-called "Austrianization" of the GDR. Willy Brandt would subsequently go even farther in his memoirs in rejecting reunification, labeling it a lie upon which the policy of the FRG had been built. Although public opinion polls continue to show widespread support for the goal of reunification in principle, they also indicate that it is not a high priority and that Germans are not willing to sacrifice their ties with the West in any reunification scheme. For a discussion of Adenauer's views, see Klaus Gotto, "Adenauer's Ost und Deutschlandpolitik 1954–63" in Rudolph Morsey and Konrad Repgen, *Adenauer Studien*, Vol. III, Matthias Gruenewald, Mainz, 1974, pp. 3–91; for Brandt's views, above all the influence of the building of the Berlin Wall on his *Ostpolitik*, see his *People and Politics: The Years 1960–1975*, Little, Brown, & Co., Boston, 1976, pp. 166–197.

<sup>3</sup> The view that the heart of the German Question is not reunification currently appears to command a strong consensus in the Federal Republic. However, that has never been seriously tested. Current policy is in many ways the result of the rejection of previously tried policies and the lack of any perceived alternative. A latent tension remains between

It would be a mistake to suggest that West German foreign policy is crafted around the goal of reunification, but national division continues to affect operational policy and the security debate in more subtle ways that are not always apparent to the outside observer. The prospect of Germans fighting against Germans in any future conflict in Central Europe raises a host of issues for the West Germans that are not relevant for other NATO forces. As Bonn officials are fond of pointing out to foreign visitors, the Germans on the other side of the East-West divide are seen first and foremost as compatriots, not communists.

Further, the FRG believes it has a special responsibility to assist Germans in the East and that it must pursue a policy that preserves what Willy Brandt termed "the substance of the German nation." Bonn's position on East-West trade, expert controls, and technology transfer, for example, has always reflected the belief that the FRG has a moral obligation to maintain living standards in the GDR and to prevent the economic and technological divide between the two halves of Europe from widening.

National partition has also reinforced the West German commitment to arms control. In the current debate over modernization of NATO's short-range nuclear forces (SNF), Bonn officials have made it clear that they do not want a concentration of nuclear weapons deployed capable of only reaching targets on German soil, including the territory of the GDR. Above and beyond such political military calculations, however, stands a strong political current that believes that detente and arms control foster reform and liberalization in Eastern Europe and will therefore both advance Bonn's national agenda.

West German attitudes toward security and defense issues are also shaped by a set of more subjective factors rooted in German history, mainly the experience of the Third Reich and Germany's defeat in World War II. One should always avoid making generalizations concerning a nation's political culture or national psyche, above all as such attitudes themselves are changing as younger generations of Germans deal with the legacy of German history. At the same time, many aspects of the current security debate even today, more than 40 years after the war, can be comprehended only against the background of German history, the deep scars left behind by the trauma of the Third

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West German reassurances that unification is not an important issue and the fact that strong political imperatives make it difficult if not impossible for German politicians to renounce reunification. For a survey of different German views on this issue see *Reden ueber das eigene Land*, Vols. 1-3, C. Bertelsmann Verlag, Munich, 1983-85.

Reich, and the way successive generations have sought to come to terms with these issues.

Perhaps the most obvious example of past German history complicating the security debate is that there is no national consensus in the Federal Republic over what it means to be German and what is the *raison d'être* of the FRG as a German state. With German nationalism widely discredited because of Hitler's abuses, such basic notions as nationalism or patriotism, concepts that constitute the psychological building blocks for a security consensus in any country, evoke very ambivalent feelings among Germans. As anyone who travels to the FRG will quickly discover, the country is largely bereft of positive national symbols or even a national holiday. Public opinion polls have repeatedly demonstrated that West Germans rank low in terms of national pride and patriotism, leading the West German public opinion expert Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann to term them a "wounded nation."<sup>4</sup>

The situation is further complicated by ongoing disputes over what exactly constitutes the German nation and what the very identity of the FRG as a German state is or should be. The Federal Republic was of course established as a provisional state pending reunification. Its founding fathers viewed it as a model for a reunified Germany and explicitly assigned to it a special role as the caretaker for all Germans at a time when the GDR was considered an illegitimate state and Soviet vassal. When Bonn recognized the GDR as a state in the early 1970s, albeit in the context of an ongoing and single German nation, it also took a step toward recognizing itself as a permanent state and not a mere *Provisorium*.

The latent ambiguities of *Ostpolitik* are reflected here as well. Although the original legal definitions from the early postwar period on what constitutes the German nation and Bonn's special responsibility for German unity remain legally valid and still form the backbone of the government's official position on the German Question, 40 years of partition have spawned many debates over whether the FRG should permanently recognize the GDR or under what conditions such a step should be considered, and whether Germans in the West should see themselves as citizens of a permanent West German state or as the future citizens of a reunified single German state.

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<sup>4</sup>See Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann and Renate Koecher, *Die verletzte Nation*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1987.

The German past not only affects attitudes toward national goals, but also touches upon the question of what means can legitimately be used to achieve these goals. German attitudes can be understood only through the prism of the past, through questions of military strategy and the purposes of military power. Germany certainly has a long and powerful tradition of military strategic thinking. Even today, West German military professionals are widely recognized within NATO for their professionalism and skill. If one seeks to make the transition from this small group of experts conversant with the NATO vernacular and strategic thinking, one rapidly discovers a huge psychological divide.

There are still fears and suspicions over a revival of German militarism outside of the country, fears that have long been cultivated by Soviet and Eastern propaganda, but in the Federal Republic itself one finds a deep antipathy and reluctance to consider the use of power or military force almost in any circumstances. In part this results from the realization that the destructiveness of modern conventional weapons as well as nuclear forces means that Central Europe would be devastated in any sustained military conflict. It also reflects the degree to which the German past has discredited the use of force. It is almost as if, as the West German historian Hans-Peter Schwarz has suggested, the Germans have sought to compensate for their previous obsession with power and great power politics by no longer wanting to have anything to do with it, with the result that they have been "tamed" in the process.<sup>5</sup> German intellectual debate over detente, reform in Eastern Europe, and the potential linkages between arms control and political change in the East is quite sophisticated, but it is often very simplistic and skewed in regard to military strategy or power, reflecting a deep antipathy toward such issues that can be understood only against the backdrop of German history.

Whether such German attitudes are politically stable, healthy, or "normal" is a matter of contention both inside and outside of the FRG. Many West Germans view the FRG's disinclination to use military power as progressive and exemplary. Indeed, one powerful school of thought sees Bonn's role in East-West relations as resulting precisely from the fact that the Germans have abandoned concepts of nationalism or power politics, thereby enabling them to play a trail-blazing role in renouncing a policy of force and in facilitating peaceful cooperation. Others see that the lack of a clear national

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<sup>5</sup>See Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die gezaehmten Deutschen. Von Machtbesessenheit zur Machtvergessenheit*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1985.

identity constitutes a national vacuum that is neither normal nor viable in the long run. They conclude that the time is ripe for the FRG to put the National Socialist past into a broader historical perspective.<sup>6</sup> Some see the FRG's ambivalence toward military power as geopolitical immaturity, handicapping the FRG as a political actor, which could make it vulnerable to the use of military advantage for political blackmail.

The purpose of this essay is not to judge, but simply to point out that the Germans are different and how such differences shape the national security debate in the FRG. Outsiders inclined to weigh questions of NATO's military doctrine, force posture, or arms control strategy on their narrow military and technical merits often discover upon arrival in the Federal Republic that the same issues have become entangled in a complex and confusing debate in the FRG. Questions of alliance strategy inevitably become intertwined with broader issues touching upon the identity of the Federal Republic as a German state, its responsibility resulting from German history, and the implication this has for its role in Europe, both in the West and in the East.

Such factors have had a major influence in shaping a distinct West German foreign policy style. For much of the postwar period, Bonn cultivated a very low foreign and security policy profile, avoiding contentious issues. West German leaders were reluctant to push the cause of "German interests" publicly and were even more reluctant to be seen as taking the lead on any controversial East-West issues, preferring to push their case in private or in the vernacular of Atlanticism or Europeanism. This did not mean, of course, that German chancellors did not vigorously pursue their own national interests. Konrad Adenauer was one of the most tenacious interlocutors for the allies, who simultaneously cultivated a very low and deferential public profile.

Since the early 1970s, a series of West German chancellors, including Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, and Helmut Kohl, have each taken careful steps to shed this

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<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Michael Stuermer, *Dissonanzen des Fortschritts, Essays ueber Geschichte und Politik in Deutschland*, R. Piper Verlag, Munich, 1986. The dispute officially centered on the question of the singularity of German war crimes, but it was rapidly transformed into a discussion over whether the FRG suffers from a vacuum of national identity and whether such a handicap needed to be overcome. More conservative commentators argued that the FRG lack of a national identity was a danger to German democracy and prevented Bonn from adopting a more assertive foreign policy role. Critics on the left claimed that the FRG must seek its national identity in having abandoned nationalism forever and instead inculcate a sense of patriotism based on the values of the West German constitution; they accused conservatives of trying to rearm the FRG psychologically to better allow it to play a great power role. The debate is documented in *Historikerstreit*, Piper Verlag, Munich, 1987.

approach and to adopt a more assertive foreign policy stance in the alliance. At the moment, it is Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher who is clearly profiting in the public eye from his open defense of "German interests" in the alliance. This shift is likely to become more pronounced as younger generations of German politicians in all political parties, less encumbered by the past, are coming to the fore. Yet such signs of assertiveness are not necessarily a sign of any new "nationalism," but rather the breaking down of old, self-imposed restraints no longer deemed necessary.<sup>7</sup>

In more concrete terms, this backdrop also helps explain why Bonn leans quite heavily on nonmilitary instruments of security. This is most obvious in the economic realm and the fashion in which the FRG has sought to use trade and economic power as a primary diplomatic instrument, above all in its ties with the East. A similar trend is evident in the case of renunciation of force agreements, which have been elevated to a cardinal principle of West German diplomacy in an attempt to allay traditional fears over German foreign policy aims in Europe.

It also helps explain the special importance that detente and arms control have come to assume in the German diplomatic arsenal. Detente was certainly not a German invention, but Bonn undoubtedly has come to see itself as its best and most ardent practitioner. In part, this is because detente and arms control are seen as defusing many of the dilemmas sketched out above. It is also tied to the belief, however, that the Germans have both a special aptitude for such a policy resulting from their historic role in Central and Eastern Europe as well as a special responsibility for detente resulting from German history and the circumstances that brought about the division of Europe in the first place. As a result, detente and arms control have been elevated to the sine qua non of West German security policy and, in the eyes of some critics, a sort of surrogate for military strategy.

Such factors have been crucial in setting the terms of the security debate in the FRG. Whereas many Americans tend to view security policy first and foremost in military terms, many Germans define it as a political and economic commodity. This is

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<sup>7</sup>Again, the German Social Democratic left, less encumbered by Germany's National Socialist past, has often been less hesitant to adopt direct appeal to German national interests than German conservatives. In the 1950s Kurt Schumacher was far more overtly nationalist in tone than Konrad Adenauer. Similarly, it was Willy Brandt who, in the early 1970s, ran an election campaign with the slogan "Model Germany," and it was the SPD that wrapped itself in the banner of "German interests" when it ran on an anti-INF platform in the 1983 elections.

true in much of Western Europe, of course, above all among the smaller and medium-sized countries that have a history of acquiring security through political and economic arrangements. In the German case, this is reinforced by the residual effect of past history and the fashion in which history continues to color the security debate. Outside observers who arrive in the Federal Republic prepared to discuss the military pros and cons of different security approaches often find themselves confronted with a maze of intertwined moral and ethical issues, unresolved questions of German identity, and debates over a special German responsibility for peace and detente in Central Europe.

### III. MAINTAINING (AND KEEPING) A BALANCE

Once again, history and geography have dealt West German foreign policymakers a difficult hand. As part of a divided nation situated on the front line of the East-West divide, West German foreign policymakers are compelled to maintain a careful balancing act between their Western security bonds and their national interest in maintaining ties with the East. Furthermore, because of their simultaneous heavy dependence upon its Western allies and their Eastern exposure, West German internal politics are more sensitive to external shocks resulting from changing political trends in the West or events in Eastern Europe, thereby complicating management of the domestic security debate as well.

Bonn has been able to maintain the balance over some four decades, during which many changes have occurred in East-West relations, the military balance, NATO strategy, and Bonn's own role both in the West and in the East. In all fairness to Bonn, it is clear where West German priorities lie. Indeed, if one surveys the postwar period, the FRG has a remarkable track record of continuity, stability, and predictability. West German statesmen have maintained realistic, self-imposed limits and accommodated the sensitivities of its neighbors in both domestic politics and foreign policy. Moreover, the Bonn government has always sided with the West and NATO, and the West German electorate has consistently supported this over the decades.

The very fact that Bonn is constantly forced to maintain this delicate balance between conflicting interests creates an inherent tension in West German foreign policy that invites the lingering suspicion over whether Bonn will always be able to deliver on difficult and politically painful security decisions. When differences of opinion emerge between West German opinion and that of other major Western capitals, another factor often enters into the equation—the suspicion that Germans have a latent tendency to look for a more independent role, possibly through some deal whereby Moscow would offer a form of national unity in return for greater subservience to Soviet security interests. Although the historical examples cited to support these alleged proclivities, such as the Rapallo Treaty of 1920, often betray a poor understanding of German diplomatic history, they are a powerful testimony to residual suspicions over Bonn's ability to maintain this balancing act.

One reason why such a balance has become increasingly difficult for the FRG in recent years is the collapse of the security consensus in the Federal Republic in the early 1980s. Following the SPD's acceptance of NATO membership and alliance strategy in the early 1960s, the FRG experienced some two decades of a remarkable domestic consensus on defense and security policy based on widespread acceptance of nuclear deterrence and forward defense. The passionate debates of the late 1960s and early 1970s over *Osipolitik* hardly touched upon issues of defense and security policy. Instead, a strong consensus emerged that deterrence and detente were compatible and reinforcing Western goals—principles enshrined in the Harmel Report of the late 1960s.

This consensus started to erode in the late 1970s and early 1980s and collapsed under the weight of the polarizing INF debate. In the latter half of the 1970s, leading Social Democratic thinkers such as Egon Bahr, frustrated with the limited progress that detente had achieved in Central Europe, began to argue that the inability to move from political detente to a more comprehensive military detente in Europe was linked to the contradiction between a security policy based on deterrence and the political goal of long-term comprehensive East-West cooperation. This was the initial catalyst for what would later be dubbed "common security" and what the SPD would increasingly come to hold out as an alternative to a European security system based on deterrence, which was seen as aggressive and destabilizing.

Such sentiments remained limited. They were even rejected by the Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, whose own strategic views were still rooted in concepts of deterrence and balance, and whose concerns over decoupling led him to make his famous IISS speech of 1977.<sup>1</sup> They would rapidly gain in popularity in the early 1980s under the influence of the emotional Euromissile debate when the need to "strengthen deterrence" through the deployment of Pershing II and GLCMs was widely portrayed by both the peace movement and the Soviets as an escalating and aggressive Western act that threatened to increase the risk of nuclear conflict on the continent. Bonn's ability to manage this debate was further hampered by loose American talk about the possibility of a limited nuclear war in Europe, as well as a massive Warsaw Pact campaign to fuel a war scare that swept across Central Europe in the early 1980s and to

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<sup>1</sup>The notion of balance or *Gleichgewicht* was the leitmotiv throughout Schmidt's writings on strategy since his days as West German Defense Minister. See Helmut Schmidt, *Strategie des Gleichgewichts*, Seewald Verlag, Stuttgart, 1969; and *Eine Strategie fuer den Westen*, Siedler Verlag, West Berlin, 1986.

pressure the FRG by warning that support of the INF decision would lead to an "ice age" in its ties with the East, above all with the GDR.<sup>2</sup>

If the INF deployment debate alienated the German left from existing NATO nuclear strategy, a similar process took place on the German right in the wake of Reykjavik and the road to a double zero solution on INF. Confronted with shifts in American nuclear arms control policy they perceived as precipitous and contrary to their definition of German interests, it was now German conservatives who criticized American policy, warning of the potential dangers of superpower collusion and a "sell out" of German national interests.

The implementation of the NATO dual track decision and the subsequent negotiation of the INF treaty may have restored the military status quo ante, but the political implications of the emotional and polarizing debates of the early 1980s proved to be of longer duration. The INF saga left in its wake widespread antinuclear sentiment, a West German political elite deeply divided on issues of nuclear strategy, and perhaps the death knell for the past consensus on flexible response. Emotional debates over deliberate escalation and the possibility of limited nuclear war had seriously eroded elite and public support for existing NATO strategy. Above all, it provided a tremendous boost for alternative security concepts, previously limited to small groups of obscure security experts, that now rapidly gained in popularity and credibility as they tapped a growing sense that NATO strategy was no longer sufficient or adequate.

Such trends mostly preceded the arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev on the world stage, but Gorbachev's arms control initiatives have fueled antinuclear sentiments and have led to a dramatic fall in perceptions of the Soviet threat. Public opinion polling in the FRG has documented a steady fall in threat perceptions and a steady increase in anti-nuclear sentiment since the mid-1980s, coinciding with the arms control initiatives of the new Soviet leader.<sup>3</sup> More recently, anti-nuclear sentiment has been followed by growing

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<sup>2</sup>Warsaw Pact statements repeatedly claimed, for example, that Europe faced the greatest threat of war since 1945 and spoke of the danger of a "Euroshima" resulting from NATO deployments.

<sup>3</sup>Polls taken in early 1988, for example, showed that a clear majority of West Germans no longer believed in a Soviet threat and that an equally large majority favored the removal of all nuclear weapons from West German soil. Subsequent polling has only confirmed such trends. See Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, "When the Feeling of Threat Dwindles: Defense Policy Faced with the Growing Problem of Acceptability," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 22, 1988. See also Guenther Herdegen, "The Trends are Changing," *Rheinischer Merkur*, March 31, 1989.

opposition to the burdens of maintaining a large conventional force posture on West German soil, as manifested in growing opposition to low-level flights and to large-scale maneuvers. The result has been a growing debate in the Federal Republic over whether the country is facing a "crisis of acceptability" in terms of West German society's willingness to continue to bear the burden of Western defense policy.<sup>4</sup>

Reinforcing such factors has been a longer-term process of generational change. The oft-discussed "successor generation" is slowly but surely taking over the reigns of power in Bonn and elsewhere in the political intellectual landscape.<sup>5</sup> It is a generation that is solidly democratic, more self-confident and assertive, but also one that has less of a sense of gratitude for U.S. assistance in the early postwar period; it aspires to play a more independent foreign policy role and to establish its own balance between Bonn's diverging interests and obligations in the West and in the East. Its commitment to the Atlantic Alliance is based more on cold reason than on emotion; its image of the USSR was nurtured more by detente than by the Berlin crisis; and its views of the United States are founded more upon Vietnam, Watergate, and Ronald Reagan than on memories of the Marshall Plan. It is also a generation that chafes at accusations it is not loyal to the alliance when it claims a more autonomous and self-assertive role in defining its own interests, insisting its fidelity to the West is long proven.

It is a generation that has inherited NATO, not founded it, and it is hardly surprising that it is reexamining the security arrangements entered into some 40 years ago to see if they still are suited to German interests at a time of enormous flux in East-West relations.<sup>6</sup> And it is also a generation that realizes the Federal Republic is not a fully sovereign nation. Two harrowing accidents at Ramstein Air Base and in the town of Ramscheid, together with the implications of the Libyan affair, have focused public attention on the lack of FRG full sovereign control over its air space or air waves. One accident exposed American eavesdropping capabilities on communications in the FRG,

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<sup>4</sup>See Eckhard Leubkemeier, "Acceptance Problems for NATO Strategy?" *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 8/89, February 17, 1989. See also Hans Ruehle, "There is No 'Acceptance Crisis' of German Security Policy," *Die Welt*, January 12, 1989.

<sup>5</sup>See Stephen F. Szabo (ed.), *The Successor Generation: International Perspectives of Postwar Europeans*, Buttersworth, Boston, 1983.

<sup>6</sup>For a good overview of the influence of these factors on West German attitudes toward the United States, see Harald Mueller and Thomas Risse-Kappen, "The Origins of Estrangement: The Peace Movement and the Changed Image of America in West Germany," *International Security*, Summer 1987, pp. 52-88.

and the debate over low-altitude flights educated Germans about the limits of their control over German skies. The "sovereignty debate," as it has been dubbed, is unlikely to disappear soon and will probably further politicize and emotionalize differences that emerge between Bonn and its Western allies on military and security issues.

Last but not least, shifts in the traditional party landscape in the Federal Republic, the falling appeal of the traditional parties, and the rise of radical parties on both ends of the political spectrum have complemented these changes. In the early 1980s, the split of the German left led to the emergence of the radical environmentalist Green party. More recently, West German conservatives have been confronted by the rise of the Republican party on the radical right. The causes underlying such political shifts should be sought, first and foremost, in indigenous domestic problems and the inability of the existing parties to address growing grievances among segments of the population.<sup>7</sup> Bonn is currently awash with speculation over the possible coalitions that might emerge should five parties gather sufficient votes for parliamentary representation. Not only do different coalition combinations portend different positions on security issues, but the ability of any government with a slim majority to implement controversial policies may be open to question.

It is equally important to note what is not changing in the Federal Republic. First, despite the rise of more radical parties on both ends of the political spectrum, West Germans remain firmly committed to the institutions of Western democracy. Second, ongoing speculation and editorializing in the Western press concerning German fidelity to NATO notwithstanding, the Federal Republic is not experiencing any major debate over membership in NATO. Support for German membership in the alliance remains strong, and much of the emotional criticism of the alliance and calls for West German withdrawal in the early 1980s within the peace movement have dissipated with improvement in East-West relations and progress in arms control. Indeed, a survey of the West German political landscape will quickly reveal that not a single political force in the FRG opposes NATO membership.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>The initial cause celebre for the Greens, for example, was the environment, above all nuclear energy, which the existing parties had largely ignored throughout the 1970s. The right-wing Republicans have, in turn, capitalized on latent xenophobia fueled by a major inflow of immigrants and the resulting social problems, lack of housing, etc.

<sup>8</sup>See Sec. IV. Public opinion polls show that a majority of both Green and Republican voters still support West German membership in NATO.

West German assurances to its allies that elite and public support for NATO and membership in the West remain both strong and intact are correct, but at the same time they are somewhat misleading. Despite the unquestioned strong West German support for NATO in principle, there has been a considerable shift in West German willingness to support certain aspects of longstanding NATO military strategy. This gap is perhaps most apparent in the rejection of NATO's nuclear strategy of flexible response and deliberate escalation as well as mounting criticism of nuclear deterrence writ large.<sup>9</sup> It can also be seen in the conventional realm, however, in opposition to low-level flights and large-scale conventional maneuvers, trends that raise questions about Bonn's longer-term commitment to maintaining a credible forward defense.

A situation where large numbers of Germans simultaneously support NATO and oppose crucial components of alliance strategy is hardly a stable equilibrium. Such discrepancies or contradictions can be resolved in the longer run only by changing German public opinion or by changing alliance strategy. German debate currently advocates both approaches as will be discussed in further detail below. German conservatives argue that although the current NATO strategy must be maintained, existing levels of nuclear and conventional forces must be substantially lowered to shore up public support. Much of the opposition argues for a full-scale revamping of existing strategy. In both cases, however, the West Germans are trying to use their growing weight to reshape alliance strategy and policy to better suit their interests.

West German politicians are well aware of, and sensitive to, this contradiction between overall support for the Western alliance and opposition to the specifics of alliance strategy. They differ among themselves on how to respond to it. In broad terms, they face two options. The first would be to work to reverse trends in public opinion by making it clear that existing strategy has been successful in the past and that it is only prudent to maintain it. They should explain what type of force structure needs to be maintained even if the conventional stability talks in Vienna should prove successful. Another option is to bring existing strategy closer into line with a lower level of forces that would be politically sustainable in terms of public opinion.

Needless to say, both schools of thought are represented in the current West German debate as will be discussed in the next section. Both schools of thought

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<sup>9</sup>For further details see Ronald D. Asmus, *The Politics of SNF Modernization in West Germany*, The RAND Corporation, R-3846-AF, forthcoming.

naturally claim that their views will prevail in the battle for German public opinion. Which side is correct remains to be seen. Politicians both follow and lead public opinion, and the response that leaders receive depends in large part upon their success in framing the issues and articulating the risks and benefits of various alternatives.<sup>10</sup>

Bonn's willingness to support existing NATO military strategy is all the more crucial as alliance strategy has been built around important assumptions concerning Bonn's political and military requirements. The heart of the West German debate is whether shifting political trends in the Federal Republic will drag the alliance into a new controversy over future nuclear and conventional strategy. Thus far West German politicians have been reluctant to officially open this debate. Existing strategy incorporated in such alliance documents as MC 14/3 has many implicit and explicit compromises built into it. Starting a debate over alternatives to such a strategy could prove to be a Pandora's Box, which once opened, would paralyze the capacity of the alliance to respond to the East for several years, all at a time when Bonn is keenly interested in exploiting opportunities in East-West relations.

Equally important, opinions differ as to just how elastic existing strategy is, what types of cuts can be absorbed before it must be revised, and, above all, what the alternatives are. Although concepts of defensive defense have rapidly gained in currency and credibility in some sectors in West Germany, they have yet to be seriously analyzed and tested in alliance circles. It is not at all clear whether deep cuts in nuclear or conventional forces will propel the alliance into a safer and more stable future in which offensive military campaigns are rendered structurally difficult if not impossible as the proponents of defensive defense claim, or whether they would simply lead to a replay of the difficult and divisive strategic debates of the 1950s and 1960s.

Bonn's voice is crucial in this debate for the simple reason that so much of NATO's thinking and strategy over the decades has built upon assumptions concerning West German political and military requirements. Although the Federal Republic lacks the power to impose a new strategy upon the alliance, a future erosion of support for existing policy might well confront the alliance with a new and divisive debate over alliance strategy. Moreover, trends in the security debate in the Federal Republic have

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<sup>10</sup>On a historical footnote, Adenauer managed to push through West German disarmament even though public opinion polls showed a large majority opposing such moves. Similarly, the Kohl government implemented the NATO dual track decision despite widespread opposition.

traditionally influenced the thinking in several smaller NATO nations, above all the Low Countries and Denmark. The amount of political support that can be mustered in the FRG for or against NATO strategy has implications that go well beyond West Germany's borders.

At the moment the West German foreign policy debate centers on whether NATO strategy offers an adequate basis for responding to the East, whether it is compatible with Bonn's own domestic needs, and, if not, what revisions should be considered to bring it into line with German public opinion. It is a debate over *Westpolitik*, not *Ostpolitik*. But a future debate over Bonn's Eastern policy cannot be excluded either.

As discussed earlier, since the early 1970s Bonn has pursued a policy on the German Question aimed at lowering the price of national partition by cooperating with the GDR. In operational terms it has been a policy aimed first and foremost at managing partition overcoming it; and it is based on the assumption that West German economic assistance and political restraint would eventually encourage internal liberalization in the GDR. External detente was seen as facilitating internal detente.

Current developments in Eastern Europe, mainly liberalization in Poland and Hungary, are widely seen in Bonn as confirming the correctness of its past strategy aimed at facilitating reform in the East. The dilemma that Bonn faces, however, is that the GDR has proven reticent if not hostile to the type of political reform advocated in Budapest and Warsaw as well as by some in Moscow. Should the GDR continue to resist reform, Bonn will have to question whether the billions of DM it provides annually to the GDR have furthered or impaired reform prospects.

Alternatively, should a reform process be initiated in the GDR and foster the turmoil that has emerged elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it raises the prospect of instability in one of the most sensitive geopolitical spots in the heart of Europe. What would a reforming GDR look like? It would certainly look different in the GDR than it does elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The indigenous traditions of the German labor movement may very well provide a sounder base for reform socialism in the GDR than elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

The basic question of the reformability of "real socialism" in the GDR takes on a special geopolitical importance because of the implications for the German Question. Poland and Hungary will remain nation states regardless of the pace or breadth of political and economic reform. The justification for a second German state has always

been closely intertwined with the socialist cause. Although there are several comfortable geopolitical arguments for maintaining two German states in the heart of Europe, one cannot sustain a state indefinitely with geopolitical arguments. Would the GDR stripped of its socialist edifice survive?

Such questions concerning the future of socialism in Central Europe are as unanswerable as they are tantalizing. Should the types of radical reform being pursued in some Eastern European countries continue and prove successful, they will set a powerful precedent for other countries in the region. The very viability of a second socialist German state could be tested in a new guise with no predictable answers.

The prospect of far-reaching political and economic change in Eastern Europe, including the GDR, will inevitably pose some sensitive questions for Bonn. Issues long left unresolved will have to be confronted. What would it require to placate German national aspirations? Does Bonn simply aspire to improved relations with a more liberal GDR, or is reunification likely to reemerge as a subject of public debate? Again, finding and maintaining a balance between such conflicting objectives will be no easy task. Nevertheless, the merging of a debate over NATO strategy with turbulence in Eastern Europe is likely to increase the difficulty of managing the security debate in the FRG.

#### IV. A POLITICAL LINEUP

Which Germans are likely to try to pull the alliance in which direction and why? The question is crucial as the FRG is the NATO country with the most pronounced interest in moving beyond the status quo. The West Germans have the most to gain from a successful demilitarization of the East-West competition in Europe. Such a trend would reduce the burdens the country currently bears in NATO strategy (and that a growing number of Germans are less willing to accept in the face of a diminishing Soviet threat), and enhance prospects for the type of East-West cooperation that Bonn sees as a national necessity. At the same time, Bonn has the most to lose should such an effort result in a diminished level of security without a corresponding reduction of the Soviet threat.

How future West German governments will assess the potential risks and benefits associated with changes currently underway in East and West will depend in large part on the political lineup in the FRG itself. An examination of the differing positions among the key political parties in West Germany on foreign and security policy will serve as a guide to future German attitudes on the issues the alliance must confront in the near future.

##### **CDU/CSU**

The foreign and security policy thinking of the CDU/CSU has been one of remarkable continuity over the past 40 years. When Chancellor Kohl describes himself as the "grandson" of Konrad Adenauer, he is recommitting himself and his party to the principles and foreign policy vision articulated by the FRG's first chancellor some four decades ago. In his initial address as chancellor in 1982, Kohl described Bonn's membership in NATO as part of West Germany's *raison d'état*. Coming at the height of the Euromissile debate, this was a sign of his party's commitment to West German participation in the Western alliance.

Since Adenauer, Union leaders have argued that geography and Moscow's dominant position as the continental land power in Europe, along with Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, confronted the FRG and the rest of Western Europe with a security

threat that could only be counterbalanced by the United States. In the current West German security debate Christian Democratic politicians state repeatedly that West Germany and Western Europe cannot be defended without the United States, regardless of the outcome of Gorbachev's reforms.

The same reasons have traditionally made the CDU/CSU the West German political party most committed to nuclear deterrence and the firm coupling of American and German security through the presence of American nuclear weapons. Christian Democrats have traditionally advocated the closest possible trans-Atlantic nuclear partnership with Washington, with their willingness to host American weapons essentially an attempt to make German territory an equal zone of security with the American homeland. During the INF debate of the early 1980s, CDU/CSU leaders repeatedly called for the unconditional deployment of long-range U.S. nuclear systems on West German soil. In contemporary West German politics, the CDU/CSU remains the most committed to maintaining the credibility of nuclear deterrence and flexible response.<sup>1</sup>

Another European side to the question of West German dependence upon Washington is also part of Adenauer's legacy. Although Adenauer was convinced that only the United States could provide the necessary geopolitical counterweight to the Soviet continental superpower, he was also skeptical of American reliability and of the staying power of the United States in Europe. This was one (but by no means the only) factor that made Adenauer such a strong advocate of West European integration, above all Franco-German cooperation; he saw the need for a strong and cohesive Western Europe that could defend its own interests within the Western alliance and thereby minimize its security dependency upon Washington. Adenauer's greatest political nightmare, which he personally described as his Potsdam complex, was that of a superpower deal above his head and detrimental to German interests.

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<sup>1</sup>Several prominent West German conservatives have expressed fears over German singulization following the INF treaty, and have since called for radical reductions in the numbers of nuclear artillery stationed in the FRG. Such calls do not reflect a rejection of nuclear deterrence per se but rather a desire to have a structure of nuclear weapons stationed on West German soil that is both militarily credible and politically acceptable. There is a substantial difference between calls for a restructuring and the calls of much of the German left for the removal of all nuclear weapons from West German soil and the renunciation of existing NATO strategy. For further details see Ronald D. Asmus, *The Politics of INF Modernization in West Germany*, The RAND Corporation, R-3846-AF, forthcoming.

The fear that the United States might strike a bargain with the Soviet Union detrimental to German interests has emerged at various points when German conservatives have become uncomfortable with trends in U.S. security policy, above all on nuclear issues. In the early 1960s, many West German conservatives apprehensively watched the changes in nuclear strategy introduced by the Kennedy administration and the switch to flexible response. Coupled with Washington's push for a new detente with Moscow, many West German conservatives critical of American policy pushed for an expansion of West German ties with Paris, a trend immediately dubbed German Gaullism.<sup>2</sup> The modern-day equivalent of Adenauer's Potsdam complex is known as "Reykjavik." One need only recall the reaction of prominent West German conservatives to the U.S.-Soviet summit in October 1986, which Kohl himself compared to the 1938 Munich agreement, or the anger that the double zero INF proposal evoked in some conservative circles, above all in the CSU, as a dangerous "sellout" of German interests.

West German concerns over American reliability emerge, first and foremost, on nuclear issues, for it is in this realm that German dependency is felt most acutely. For years the CDU/CSU concept of extended deterrence rested on the threat of American nuclear weapons on German soil acting as a tripwire rather than any war-fighting instrument, catalyzing an almost automatic escalation to a strategic exchange. It was in this context that the CDU/CSU supported SNF modernization in the 1983 Montebello decision as well as NATO's general political guidelines on the use of nuclear weapons adopted in 1986. Several prominent German conservatives have interpreted subsequent developments, such as American willingness to support a double zero option for INF and the Pentagon report on "Discriminate Deterrence," as confirmation of a decline in Washington's willingness to live with automatic escalation and an American desire to shift the risk in nuclear deterrence away from Washington and toward Bonn. The result has been an erosion of support even among West German conservatives for NATO nuclear doctrine.

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<sup>2</sup>Gaullism is hardly generic, however. For a divided and nonnuclear West German state, Gaullism is a luxury Bonn has not been able to afford. Paris is only a second best option for the security umbrella Washington provides. German frustration with Washington or American policy nevertheless produces periodic bursts of Gaullist German rhetoric.

The other area where there is strong continuity in CDU/CSU thinking has been in its long-term vision of how to overcome a divided Europe and resolve the German Question. When the Christian Democrats sponsored a foreign policy congress in the spring of 1988 to articulate their longer-term goals in Europe, they reiterated a vision embraced by Adenauer several decades ago in which the United States continues to provide the security umbrella necessary to counter Soviet military power. Progress toward European political integration would eventually culminate in a United States of Western Europe in loose alliance with the United States. The latter would serve as the basis for the reintegration of the countries of Eastern Europe into a broader pan-European democratic federation embracing the countries from Portugal to Poland.<sup>3</sup>

It is in this context that Christian Democratic leaders envision the resolution of the German Question. Christian Democratic Chancellors from Adenauer to Kohl have repeatedly stressed that it is only in this context that Bonn can contemplate a solution to the German Question and reunification and have rejected any proposed solution to the German Question that would lead to neutrality or the disengagement of the FRG from the political, economic, and security framework of the West. And Kohl, like Adenauer, has pushed West European integration to ensure that the FRG remains so firmly tied to the West that no one can undo its Western bonds. The Chancellor, again like Adenauer, has been criticized on this point by both the right wing of his own party and by the left for running the risk of foreclosing future options on the German Question.

If Christian Democratic thinking is characterized by continuity in these areas, there have been two areas where important shifts in Christian Democratic thinking have occurred. The first has been in conservative attitudes toward Bonn's relations with Eastern Europe, above all the GDR. The inability of the CDU/CSU to move quickly and flexibly enough in the late 1960s and early 1970s on detente because of its traditional position on the German Question contributed to its fall from power. The SPD managed to effectively exploit this issue electorally throughout the 1970s, portraying the CDU/CSU as being "against detente" and isolating it both domestically and internationally. It was only in the late 1970s and early 1980s that Kohl and other reformers within the CDU managed to move their party closer to centrist waters on dealing with the East and to prepare a new inter-party consensus. Subsequently Kohl

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<sup>3</sup>CDU Party Congress, "Our Responsibility in the World. Christian Democratic Perspectives on German, Foreign, Security, European, and Development Policy," Resolution of the 36th CDU Party Congress, CDU-Dokumentation, #19, 1988.

could pursue a policy toward the GDR and Eastern Europe that differed little from that of the SPD.

The Christian Democrats have understood how popular detente is domestically. They are determined to never again be outflanked by the SPD or FDP on relations with the GDR. The CDU/CSU still vocally defends Bonn's claim to reunification, but they have shown themselves to be quite flexible operationally in dealing with East Berlin and, in some ways, even more generous in financial terms than their Social Democratic predecessors. While more skeptical about the prospects of reform in the USSR, more worried about the dangers of denuclearization, and more suspicious about Soviets attempts to exploit differences in the West, West German conservatives also emphasize what Chancellor Kohl has termed the "central significance" of Soviet-West German ties in Bonn's foreign policy.

The CDU/CSU has been quite successful in making the transition to a more flexible Eastern policy. Despite occasional intra-party criticism that Bonn was going too far to accommodate the GDR inter-German ties, Kohl has largely succeeded in keeping dissent within the party under control. A flexible stance has also paid off in electoral terms. The chancellor has repeatedly singled out improved ties with the GDR as one of the most important accomplishments of his government. In many ways the CDU/CSU has come to adopt the German version of the Republican argument in the United States that they are better qualified to deal with communists because no one doubts their ideological principles or commitment to the Western alliance.

The second area where there have been important shifts in West German conservative thinking has been on arms control. Here the party's record has been mixed at best. As one Western commentator has aptly put it, CDU/CSU policy on arms control up through 1987 was "a crisis waiting to happen."<sup>4</sup> The CDU's traditional anti-communism, its strong embrace of nuclear deterrence, and its commitment to a strong American defense presence on German soil made it a skeptic of arms control. Adenauer's open rejection of arms control in the 1950s and 1960s is well documented. Even in the 1970s, when the pursuit of arms control gained widespread popularity in the FRG, the CDU/CSU remained somewhat reserved, accusing the ruling SPD-led government in Bonn of not paying sufficient attention to the military balance and

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<sup>4</sup>See Clay Clements, "Beyond INF: West Germany's Centre-Right Party and Arms Control in the 1990s," *International Affairs*, Winter 1988/89, p. 56.

generating excessive expectations on what type of security relief arms control might provide.

When the CDU-led government came to power in 1982, Chancellor Kohl embraced a much more positive stance on arms control for several reasons. First, the CDU/CSU's coalition with Genscher's FDP required such a stance. Second and equally important, however, the FRG was in the midst of an emotional and divisive INF debate, and many German conservatives came to view arms control as a tool for de-emotionalizing the debate and a way of managing the passions of German public opinion aroused by the Euromissile issue. In response to domestic critics, Chancellor Kohl repeatedly claimed that one of the cardinal principles of his foreign and security policy was to create "peace with fewer weapons." As a result, West German conservatives embraced the dual track principle, even though they believed in the need for new NATO long-range INF on its own merits, as well as the zero solution as a desired goal in such negotiations. That position had originated in Bonn during Schmidt's tenure and had since been adopted by the Reagan administration.

A rapidly changing East-West climate and improving prospects for arms control would soon lay bare the contradiction between the CDU/CSU's desire to bolster the credibility of deterrence and its desire to make deterrence more palatable in political terms. When the zero option emerged as a possible negotiated solution for INF, conservative figures immediately warned that German interests were in danger of being sacrificed.<sup>5</sup> As the Soviet Union and the United States moved toward an INF treaty, West German conservatives realized that it was politically impossible to stop a treaty they had publicly called for all along; they instead sought to reshape the emerging Western position on INF in the direction of lower but equal ceilings. In the meantime, open divisions started to emerge in the ranks of the CDU/CSU as other Union leaders, horrified at the electoral consequences of being labeled the "missile party" and advocating a position even tougher than that of the Reagan administration, called for acceptance of the zero option. Amidst growing isolation and internal division, Kohl agreed to the zero option solution on INF while stipulating that the West German

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<sup>5</sup>Franz Josef Strauss warned that it was necessary "to watch like hell lest the Americans agree to solutions that do not damage their security but can work out very problematically for us." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 27, 1986.

Pershing 1A be excluded from any agreement.<sup>6</sup> The cost of holding out on this issue also was too high, however, and in August 1987 the chancellor announced that in the context of an INF treaty Bonn would unilaterally destroy the Pershing 1A launchers.

The rapid pace of arms control and the repeated public retreats the CDU/CSU was forced into has left the party in a state of confusion from which it has yet to fully recover. The bitter reaction of some West German conservatives, evident in their charges of singularization and their critical response to the Discriminate Deterrence report, is explainable only against this background and the fact that such steps were seen as further proof of a trend in American policy directly contrary to German interest. The immediate cry from conservative circles for a comprehensive concept or *Gesamtkonzept* was in many ways a call for breathing room to allow them to establish some order within their own ranks.

This task has proved difficult for two reasons, one being Gorbachev and perceptions of a lessening Soviet threat. Many West German conservatives are worried about what they see as a near euphoria in the West German public over Gorbachev. They are aware that enthusiasm for Gorbachev is linked to the hope that changes in Soviet policy will reduce West German dependence upon Washington. They are concerned lest political pressures in West Germany for reductions, reinforced by a burden-sharing debate and the budget deficit in Washington, lead to a premature reduction of American troops in the FRG.

The second reason has been the poor performance of the CDU in successive state elections and the falling fortunes of the party and its chancellor in public opinion polls. Although still intellectually committed to NATO strategy, the tough struggles of the early 1980s appear to have broken the political backbone of the party in battles over controversial defense and security issues. Faced with a fight for survival, the CDU/CSU has completely turned around on several issues, including conscription and SNF modernization, in an attempt to bolster its falling popularity. Whether such steps will help the party's electoral fortunes remains to be seen.

In many ways German conservatives are seen as following rather than leading in the security debate. Although the CDU/CSU managed to regain the chancellorship in the

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<sup>6</sup>Though not anxious to modernize the Pershing 1A, West German conservatives, above all those in the CSU, had hoped to gain some future bargaining leverage by retaining the system.

early 1980s, it never managed to reestablish full control over the West German foreign policy agenda. In part this was because it was unable to regain the Foreign Office, which has remained firmly in the hands of Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the FDP. The Christian Democrats have also been handicapped by the deaths of two of its spokesmen, Alois Mertes and Werner Marx, shortly after they took office, and the more recent death of Franz Josef Strauss. The efforts of younger Christian Democrats, centered around such figures as Volker Ruehe, to build up the party's expertise and foreign and defense policy profile have met with only partial success.<sup>7</sup>

This is one reason why the CDU/CSU is both underrepresented and on the intellectual defensive in the current foreign and security policy debate, even though it has been the main coalition partner in Bonn for over six years. Still committed to traditional NATO strategy, the CDU/CSU nonetheless finds itself faced with widespread public sentiment against nuclear weapons and lessening threat perceptions of the USSR. The party leadership believes in the necessity of nuclear deterrence, but it is concerned that unless it take steps on security policy, above all with regard to the modernization of nuclear weapons, precipitate widespread political opposition will lead to its political downfall. Christian Democrats often seem to be responding to, rather than shaping, public and elite opinion, trailing behind both Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and the SPD in setting the trends and establishing the options.

#### **FDP**

A discussion about the foreign and security policy thinking of the FDP revolves around the ideas and influence of Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Genscher was essentially a foreign policy novice when he took over the Foreign Office. He became Foreign Minister in 1974 because internal balance in the social-liberal coalition required the FDP to maintain that slot, and because he was the only one with enough stature to replace Walter Scheel. The same skills that had made Genscher such a successful domestic politician—political astuteness, hard work, and a remarkable survival instinct—were to turn him into the most ambitious and influential Foreign Minister in his country's history.

Genscher's opposition within the FDP, his party's broker role in the West German parliamentary system, his long tenure as Foreign Minister, and his undeniable political

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<sup>7</sup>Volker Ruehe (ed.), *Herausforderung Aussenpolitik. Die neue Generation der CDU/CSU meldet sich zu Wort*, Busse and Seewald Verlag, Herford, 1988.

skills have all turned him into the dominant voice in foreign policy formulation. Unlike a Secretary of State in the United States who serves at the will of the American president, Genscher has his own independent power base. Indeed, Genscher's dominance of the Foreign Office and of Bonn's foreign policy agenda is so great that it is difficult to imagine contemporary German foreign policy without him.

Those who have followed Genscher's political career will notice a clear evolution and shift of emphasis in his foreign policy thinking incorporating many of the broader shifts that have taken place in the Federal Republic since the 1970s. The staunch Atlanticist of the mid-1970s has become an avid Europeanist; his embrace of Franco-German cooperation reflects a conviction that the degree of West German dependence upon the United States is politically unhealthy for both sides and that Europe must have a greater say in its own security. Genscher's elevation of arms control to the sine qua non of West German security policy shift underlines the way arms control has become a precondition for any defense measures. His espousal of detente as a national necessity and a special German responsibility reflects the importance that *Ostpolitik* has come to assume in West German foreign policy.

Genscher has also come to symbolize a new West German self-assertiveness in NATO. Having always enjoyed the reputation of an excellent tactician, Genscher nonetheless stood in the shadow of Helmut Schmidt whose views on foreign and security policy dominated the social-liberal coalition throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Not only has he managed to exploit his domestic popularity and internal CDU/CSU divisions to dominate the coalition's foreign policy, but he has sought to exploit the warming trend in East-West affairs to push his own agenda for German foreign policy on NATO security issues, Western policy toward Eastern Europe, and relations with the USSR and Mikhail Gorbachev.

Since the mid-1980s, Genscher has managed to put his personal stamp on Bonn's foreign policy and to articulate his own foreign policy vision. Fashionable criticism of "Genscherism" notwithstanding, it would be a mistake to accuse him of not being committed to the Western alliance. It was Genscher, for example, who engineered the coalition switch in 1982, in part because of his doubts about Schmidt's ability to deliver his party in favor of Euromissile deployment. Similarly, Genscher has always opposed calls for unilateral arms control concessions by the West and has headed off numerous attempts over the years to call for cuts in defense spending. In the current debate, he

rejects assertions that West German security policy is facing a "crisis of acceptance." Similarly, despite Genscher's current position on SNF modernization, he has avoided much of the fashionable fundamentalist critique of nuclear weapons that is popular on the German left, making it clear that he sees no alternative to nuclear deterrence and flexible response.<sup>8</sup>

There is little doubt that Genscher's longer-term vision of the alliance is different from that harbored by many West German conservatives. He is likely to push for change in the future in terms of both policy and alliance structure. While committed to an ongoing American presence in Western Europe, Genscher views the degree of West German dependence upon Washington as unhealthy in the longer run for both sides. Similarly, he has frequently responded to his critics by arguing that Gorbachev's new thinking requires a modernization of Western thinking as well. Although he is in favor of nuclear deterrence, Genscher clearly believes that the FRG has nothing to fear from the arms control process, and he wants a substantial reduction in the numbers of nuclear weapons involved, with their role limited to what he refers to as the final "safety net of nuclear deterrence."

In numerous policy statements Genscher has emphasized that the bipolar world is coming to an end and that Europe must assert itself in a new multipolar international environment. He has become an impassioned advocate of West European integration and the knitting together of both halves of Europe. Genscher has advocated a special role for the FRG in assisting the reform process in Eastern Europe based on German historical responsibility, and his efforts have won applause in several Eastern European capitals. Foreign Ministry spokesmen have also emphasized that they see reforms in such countries as Hungary as a possible path for a future resolution of the German Question.

Genscher's enthusiasm for Gorbachev must also be seen in this context. His urging that the West take Gorbachev "by his word" reflects a more benign assessment of longer-term Soviet policy goals toward Western Europe and of Moscow's willingness or ability to exploit apparent Western weakness. It also reflects his belief that Gorbachev's reforms, if successful, offer a historical opportunity to initiate a transition to a system of European security based on a reformed Soviet Union, a militarily and politically restructured Warsaw

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<sup>8</sup>For further details see Asmus, forthcoming.

Pact, and a looser and more balanced security relationship between the United States and Western Europe.

Subsequent developments in the USSR as well as in Soviet policy toward Europe have only further strengthened the conviction of Genscher and the Foreign Office that Gorbachev is both willing and able to move in this direction. It is hardly an accident that this policy also aims at reducing Bonn's handicaps in East-West relations in the military sphere, as well as enhancing the economics and technology that are West German strengths. It offers a longer-term vision for the FRG in which Bonn remains fully integrated in the West while its economic prowess allows it to promote detente in East and Central Europe.

The FDP's handicap is in many ways its dependence upon Genscher and his current popularity. Although it continues to enjoy strong national support, the party has done poorly in local and state elections; its ability to maintain the minimum 5 percent for national representation is an ongoing topic for political speculation. Moreover, the poor showing of Chancellor Kohl and his party in recent communal elections has again raised questions over the future viability of the conservative-liberal coalition and the possibility of Genscher again contemplating a switch in coalitions.

Current conventional wisdom suggests that Genscher is hardly eager for such a switch. Not only are differences with the SPD still substantial, above all on economic policy, but the clientele of the FDP has become more conservative. In addition, Genscher and his party have been in power so long that they are open to charges of opportunism. Should Genscher again feel the need to switch coalition partners, he must be careful to avoid the accusations of opportunism and lack of ideals and principles he was confronted with when he deserted the coalition with the SPD in 1982.<sup>9</sup>

### **SPD**

Of all the West German political parties, the West German Social Democratic Party has laid out the most cogent, comprehensive, and radical concept for future European security. In part this is the luxury of an opposition party, but the SPD has always been a party of intellectuals and visionary thinkers. The SPD's vision has been

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<sup>9</sup>Genscher's popularity has long bounced back, but his days as a politician seemed numbered after the collapse of the social-liberal coalition in the fall of 1982. The experience is reported to have greatly influenced him. See Werner Filmer and Heribert Schwan, *Hans-Dietrich Genscher*, ECON Verlag, Dusseldorf, 1988.

articulated under the rubric of a second *Ostpolitik*. It is a mixture of denuclearization and partial superpower disengagement from Central Europe and represents the culmination of the consequences the SPD has drawn from trends in East-West relations in the 1970s and 1980s, which it sees as being confirmed by developments in Soviet foreign policy under Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>10</sup>

Many Western observers have been surprised by how far and how fast the SPD has moved to the left since it left power in 1982. However, such changes had their roots both in generational change and in the intellectual debates that took place within the party in the course of the 1970s and early 1980s. These shifts were largely obscured to the outside eye by Helmut Schmidt's ability to force his own views upon unruly party faithful throughout much of the 1970s. Following Schmidt's departure, many of his traditional views of security policy were rejected; and the party quickly coalesced around a new and very different security platform.

Accusations that the SPD opposes NATO are clearly mistaken insofar as there is an overwhelming consensus in the party in favor of membership. Nevertheless it does call for far-reaching changes in both the nuclear and conventional structures and strategies of the alliance. Successive party resolutions have, for example, called for a shift in NATO nuclear strategy to a minimal nuclear deterrent bereft of any war-fighting capability. At a recent congress in Muenster, the SPD advocated a third zero option and called for the eventual denuclearization of the Federal Republic and a reduction of NATO's nuclear deterrent and air- and sea-based systems coupled to the U.S. strategic deterrent. The SPD's security policy expert Egon Bahr has labeled existing levels of nuclear stocks in West Germany as overkill and suggested that some 50-100 warheads would suffice for the West European theater.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>For the most recent SPD position paper laying out its "comprehensive concept" see "European Security 2000—A Comprehensive Concept for European Security from a Social Democratic Point of View," *Presseservice der SPD*, July 6, 1989.

<sup>11</sup>"The short-range and tactical nuclear weapons on our soil constitute for us the same type of overkill capacity that exists in strategic weapons for both superpowers. We have 4000 warheads; there are more on the other side. If these were cut in half, we would still have more than could conceivably be used. The Germans will not be any more brave than the Japanese, remarked Helmut Schmidt recently. Ok, even if we give ourselves the benefit of the doubt, and assume that we won't capitulate after two but rather after six or ten nuclear detonations, I am firmly convinced that the will to fight will be gone, both here and on the other side, when the first nuclear mushroom cloud is sighted. We have 4,000 of these things. If one reduced them to 50 or 100 systems, the level of deterrence

Such changes in the nuclear realm are matched by equally radical proposals on restructuring conventional forces where Social Democrats continue to develop their concepts for a conventional defense posture based on "structural nonoffensive defense." While such notions are still treated with considerable skepticism by many defense experts, they have already generated wide political appeal and have rapidly been assimilated into the political vocabulary. Social Democratic security experts still claim to embrace a strategy of forward defense, but the types of cuts they embrace are widely seen as potentially undermining forward defense as it is currently constituted. Many traditional defense planners fear that the deep cuts in conventional forces advocated by the SPD would compel the alliance to move toward some form of mobile defense where the potential gravity of battle would take place back from the inter-German border.

Social Democrats reject criticism that it would be imprudent to alter Western security policy while the outcome of Gorbachev's new thinking is uncertain. Instead, they maintain that West German society is no longer willing to bear the heavy burden that current NATO doctrine requires; further, the alliance's unwillingness to consider deep cuts in nuclear and conventional forces will ultimately foster public opposition. Social Democratic thinkers consider the alliance's current nuclear strategy to be anachronistic and counterproductive in terms of furthering East-West cooperation and the possibilities offered by Soviet reforms. They also believe that existing alliance structures are in need of a major overhaul. Much of the SPD's willingness to call for reductions in nuclear forces reflects a desire to reduce American influence over the FRG and to increase West German autonomy in a reformed alliance.

Another important motor behind Social Democratic thinking lies in Eastern Europe. Social Democrats have always seen changes in security policy as a potential tool of political engineering in the East. Gorbachev's reforms in the USSR are a confirmation of precisely the type of reform communism they have always sought to

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is as great as with 4,000, always assuming that the other side takes corresponding steps." On conventional cuts Bahr stated: "It is impossible to explain to our citizens that we need this amount of military forces in these two states [the FRG and the GDR] when all the politicians in the East and in the West always talk about how secure Europe is compared with other regions in the world. . . . We have at this moment in both states an assembly of military forces that are designed to start a bloodbath. Everyone in the world must be able to understand that the citizens of these two countries believe that this is exaggerated, perhaps even dangerous, in any case unnecessary. The NATO proposal calling for reduction to 20,000 tanks for both sides in Europe appears, when placed against this background, entirely out of proportion, timid, almost comical." Bahr's speech at the Munich Wehrkundetagung reprinted in *Europaeische Wehrkunde*, No. 3, 1989, p. 165.

foster. They are convinced that Gorbachev is interested in a far-reaching political and military restructuring of Soviet-East European relations, and they know that such a restructuring will compel a diminution of Soviet control. Coupled with a restructuring of the Western alliance, this would lay the foundation for the type of European peace order that has been at the heart of Social Democratic foreign policy thinking since the days of Willy Brandt.

Social Democratic politicians have sought to use everything from demographic trends, financial austerity, and growing opposition to low-level flights to argue that the current conventional structures are no longer viable in political or economic terms and have become a hindrance to a more cooperative system of East-West security. A restructuring of the alliance's nuclear and conventional postures are to be complemented by expanded confidence-building measures. The SPD has established working groups with both the GDR and Poland and has come up with a series of regional security arrangements designed to serve as pilot projects.

This platform was essentially articulated before Mikhail Gorbachev appeared on the scene. The fact that Moscow has embraced many SPD concepts on common security, the need to transcend nuclear deterrence, or calls for nonoffensive defense as core elements in Soviet "new thinking" has confirmed many Social Democrats' convictions that such notions may be negotiable with a Gorbachev leadership. Such visions are, of course, long term, and it would be a mistake to assume that SPD positions are set in concrete. The current party leader Hans-Jochen Vogel has made a concerted effort to steer the party back toward centrist waters. Moreover, Social Democrats are fully aware that such changes can be introduced only through a concerted alliance effort and with American support. If much of the SPD's intellectual energy in the early 1980s was directed at designing alternatives to the policies of the Reagan administration, which they bitterly opposed, there is now a greater willingness to search for common ground in the West.

While inching back toward the mainstream of political credibility, the SPD nevertheless sees domestic trends in the FRG as continuing to shift in its favor, above all on the nuclear issue. At the same time, the SPD continues to face the need for a future coalition partner. Following the breakup of the SPD/Green coalition in the state of Hessen in the early 1980s, the party leadership had excluded the possibility of a coalition with the Greens on the national level and had clearly sought to woo the FDP. With the

formation of a Red/Green coalition in West Berlin, the party leadership is again faced with the contentious issue of a future Red/Green coalition at the national level when it is trying to boost its credibility in the political center. Although conventional wisdom still runs that the party leadership would oppose any coalition with the Greens on the national level, above all because of deep differences on security policy, no one is precluding any developments in view of the flux in domestic West German politics.

### THE GREENS

The rise of the alternative, radical ecological, and pro-disarmament Green party in West German politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted from several factors. At one level, it represented a fracturing of the German left and the rejection of the type of moderate posture the SPD had adopted under Helmut Schmidt on energy, economic, and security policy. It was also tied up with generational change, however, and represented the protest of a small but vocal countercultural segment of the West German intelligentsia. Having profited first from the tardiness of the traditional political parties to respond to growing environmental concerns and second from the war scare that swept the FRG in the early 1980s, the Greens are now firmly established in the West German political landscape.

From the outset, the Greens have been badly split between a more fundamentalist faction known as the "Fundis" and a more pragmatic wing termed the "Realos." The former insist on maintaining a fundamentalist critique of the capitalist system, reject reform from within, and push for change from outside, the latter have argued that change can be achieved only by working within the parliamentary system and have called for a working coalition with the SPD. The fundamentalist faction dominated the party's national leadership for much of the early 1980s. More recently, however, the Realos have been in the ascendancy; and in spring of 1988 the pragmatic wing of the Greens managed for the first time to achieve a majority position. The establishment of a Red-Green coalition in West Berlin and the growing problems of the conservative-liberal coalition have all reinforced such trends and buttressed the position of those arguing that the Greens must forge a coalition with the SPD at the national level.

Renewed speculation over the prospect of a so-called Red-Green coalition is ironically not the result of an improved electoral performance by the Greens, or even the SPD, but rather the splintering of the German conservative camp and a possible

disintegration of the conservative-liberal alliance. Whether the Greens will be better able to manage their own internal differences and become a more stable partner for the SPD remains to be seen. The two parties have established informal working groups to explore how much common ground might be established between Social Democratic and Green positions.

One crucial test case of the viability of a future Red-Green coalition will be the question of security policy, above all West German membership in NATO. Although the Greens officially called for West German withdrawal from NATO throughout much of the 1980s, a new debate over NATO membership has emerged in recent years in the wake of an improving East-West relationship, mostly in the arms control realm. Several prominent members of the Realo faction have called for a reexamination of the party's previous positions with the argument that the INF treaty demonstrated that disarmament could be pursued from a position in the alliance. Others have insisted that West German integration in NATO provided a means of control over nationalist tendencies in the FRG and a hedge against Bonn's ever seeking to pursue the type of great power strategy that had previously led to disaster for both Germany and Europe. On a more tactical level, Green leaders have admitted that a unilateral West German withdrawal from NATO could be politically counterproductive and that Green recognition of NATO would in any case be a precondition for a future alliance with the SPD on the national level.<sup>12</sup>

Several position papers have emerged calling upon the Greens to accept both NATO and the EEC and to use such institutions to pursue the policy objectives of radical disarmament and overcoming the East-West divide.<sup>13</sup> An anti-NATO stance is still an element of political identity in important sectors of this party. Voices advocating a more nationalist form of German anti-nuclearism can still be heard, and security politics will continue to stir major debates within Green ranks. The dominant trend in the Greens, however, is toward acceptance of the institutions of Western political, economic, and military integration; this trend is reinforced by public opinion polls showing that a majority of Green voters favor NATO membership.

Such trends notwithstanding, the Greens will continue to call for radical changes in the Western alliance and embrace notions of defensive and civil defense and passive

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<sup>12</sup>See Wolfgang Bruckmann, "Green Disarmament Policy in a Crisis," *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, May 6, 1989.

<sup>13</sup>See Juergen Schnappertz and Wolfgang Bruckmann, "Reflections on a Strategy for Foreign Policy and a Policy of Peace," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, April 4, 1989.

resistance in line with their pacifist traditions. Although a potential Red-Green alliance might be able to compromise on West German membership in the alliance, it would be compelled to push for far-reaching changes in alliance strategy.

### THE REPUBLICANS

A rather sudden and dramatic new development on the West German political scene has been the rise of the radical right Republican party, initially founded in Bavaria by several deputies from the the CDU's sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), disillusioned over Franz Josef Strauss's apparent about face on relations with the East and his visits to East Berlin and Moscow. It broke through to national prominence with its strong showing in local elections in West Berlin and Frankfurt. Although its future electoral fortunes remain uncertain, the Republican party has already gained formal representation in the West German Bundestag because of its performance in West Berlin in line with that city's special status under West German constitutional law.

Perhaps the most important reason for the rise of right-wing protest parties in local and state elections in the FRG is the explosive issue of foreigners. Although high unemployment in past years had focused attention on the issue of foreign workers in the FRG, the combination of political refugees seeking to take advantage of the FRG's liberal political asylum laws and, more recently, a tremendous inflow of ethnic German refugees from the East has elicited a blue collar conservative backlash in a country with little tradition of assimilating foreigners. West German commentators themselves are divided over the longer-term implications of this recent upsurge in electoral support for far right parties. One view is that this trend represents little more than a strong protest vote against the CDU and the strategy pursued by its current General Secretary Heiner Geissler. By trying to open the party up toward the political center and attract white collar professionals, young voters, and women, the party may have alienated its traditional conservative clientele.

Other commentators simply believe that the traditional political landscape is changing and becoming more fractured as the bonds that determined traditional party allegiance erode, thereby making it difficult for either the SPD or the CDU/CSU to retain its dominant position. The traditional pattern of West German politics—ruling coalitions in Bonn formed by either of the two large parties, with the FDP playing the role as the crucial power broker—may become increasingly anachronistic. One of the historic

accomplishments of the CDU/CSU was to integrate the German right into a broad-based and democratic party. Christian Democratic party leaders have always seen it as crucial to prevent the rise of a party to their political right, not only to defend West German democracy but to ensure their own political power base.

Such domestic trends also threaten to have major international implications. First, the rise of radical parties on both the right and the left will inevitably increase concern over the stability of West German democracy. Second, should the CDU/CSU prove itself unable to stem the loss of support on its conservative flank and perform poorly in crucial upcoming state elections, it will fuel speculation over the potential demise of the conservative-liberal coalition in Bonn. Third, although such right-wing parties have yet to articulate any coherent views on foreign and security policy, they are likely to raise the question of unification and oscillate among right-wing neutralism, West German withdrawal from NATO, and negotiations with Moscow on German reunification.<sup>14</sup> Such demands are likely to remain minority views, but discussion about them will fuel foreign concern over the future reliability of the FRG as an alliance partner, making the establishment of a new consensus in the FRG on security policy more difficult.

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<sup>14</sup>According to Republican leader Franz Schoenhuber: "As long as Germany is divided, there will be no assured peace in Europe. And how does one attain reunification? Certainly not against the will of the Soviet Union. Therefore one must distinguish between the necessary ideological struggle against communism on the home front, and foreign-political maneuverability against Moscow. The Soviet Union has remained Russia. And Russia is nearer to us than America, not merely geographically. Here I am a follower of Bismarck who believed that the key to the fruitful development of our fatherland lay in a positive relationship with Russia." As quoted in Gordon Craig, "The Rising Star of the German Right," *The New York Review of Books*, June 15, 1989, p. 24.

## **V. ALTERNATIVE GERMAN FUTURES**

Trying to think through a set of realistic and alternative scenarios for the future development of German attitudes toward NATO against this fluid background of domestic German politics and East-West relations in Europe can be daunting. In addition to the endogenous uncertainties of German politics, there are few countries in NATO where external events in either the West or the East are more closely watched or where they have a greater effect in terms of shaping both elite and public opinion. Bonn's reliance upon its Western allies for its security, the stationing of large numbers of allied troops on its soil, and its status as part of a divided nation all make the domestic fabric of the Federal Republic much more open and sensitive to political developments in the East and in the West.

Future West German attitudes toward the alliance will be shaped by the evolution of East-West relations on the continent, the policies pursued by Bonn's key allies in the West, and the evolution of domestic and foreign policy reform in the East. The following four scenarios are designed to incorporate a spectrum of very different evolutions in East-West relations and consider how they might mesh with and influence domestic trends in the Federal Republic over the next five years.

### **SUCCESSFUL ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT**

In this scenario NATO succeeds in consolidating an intra-alliance consensus based on the maintenance of flexible response and forward defense as the twin pillars of Western defense strategy. From this basis, the alliance manages to negotiate large asymmetrical reductions in conventional forces. Such cuts stabilize the military balance on the Central front, allow for some reductions and restructuring of nuclear forces in Western Europe, and ease many of the political pressures for arms control progress facing the alliance, above all Bonn. European security continues to be based upon the existing structures with NATO retaining its military strategy, although at lower levels.

It happens in the following way. First, American political leadership is mature, responsive, and sensitive to domestic public opinion in Western Europe, especially in the FRG. Having committed itself to maintaining flexible response and nuclear deterrence,

Washington manages to restore an alliance consensus on the issue of theater nuclear modernization. Along with France and the United Kingdom, the United States assumes an active role in channeling the debate over nuclear weapons in the FRG in a more constructive direction and in explaining the ongoing need for a proper balance of conventional and nuclear forces, Gorbachev notwithstanding. A package deal involving deep cuts in the overall number of nuclear weapons coupled with a restructuring and modernization of the remaining potential is tailored to meet German domestic political requirements. As a result the Bonn government manages to reset the terms of the security debate in a fashion that allows it to finesse the issue of nuclear modernization and prevent it from becoming a divisive election issue.

In the East, Gorbachev shows himself willing to negotiate asymmetrical cuts on SNF that result in equal but lower ceilings, thereby preserving the credibility of flexible response at a somewhat diminished level. Gorbachev's announced unilateral cuts of Soviet conventional forces are followed by a bilateral agreement at the CFE talks in Vienna. Such reductions would be concentrated in those areas of offensive armaments of greatest concern to NATO, such as tanks and artillery, thereby reducing the Pact's potential for large-scale offensive operations even in a post-mobilization scenario. NATO would still be left with sufficient forces to meet its operational minimum and to sustain a credible forward defense strategy. Such cuts would be flanked by the introduction of more extensive confidence building measures and greater transparent measures.

In the USSR, Gorbachev's domestic reforms are slowed by rising national unrest and economic difficulties. Although the reform process is continued, it becomes more restricted, dampening speculation over and Western expectations for more extensive changes in Soviet attitudes toward European security. At the same time, Moscow encourages a modest expansion of ties between its allies in Eastern Europe and the West, both bilaterally and between the EEC and the CMEA. While willing to grant its Eastern European allies expanded leeway in domestic affairs, the Soviet leadership also moves to counter emerging instability and to insure that the reform process does not spin out of control.

Within Western Europe, expanded political and economic integration after 1992 is buttressed by expanding cooperation in the security realm, thereby strengthening the European pillar of the alliance. Washington balances supporting efforts toward greater

European unifications while maintaining a guiding political hand in the management of East-West affairs in Europe.

Within the Federal Republic a consensus on security policy is slowly knit back together around a thinned-out and restructured nuclear force; similarly, conventional reductions are supplemented by a modest restructuring of NATO conventional forces that does not go so far as to call forward defense into question. West German political aspirations are constructively channeled in expanding West European integration, thereby relieving Western concerns over Bonn's growing economic and political weight. Bonn, in turn, would continue to expand its technological and financial cooperation with the CMEA countries; this would include a modest but continual expansion of ties with the GDR. At the same time, Bonn plays a leading role in advancing cooperation between a more cohesive Western Europe and the East. Relations between the two German states are improved, and each retains its role in its own alliance.

The alliance structures upon which European security has been built would remain intact. The conventional balance would improve and be buttressed by a nuclear force posture that is politically sustainable and provides a credible military deterrent. It is complemented by gradually expanding cooperation between the two halves of Europe in the areas of travel, trade, and emigration.

### **UNSUCCESSFUL ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT**

The previous scenario is one in which everything goes right from a NATO viewpoint. American policy, German public opinion, and Soviet positions all evolve in directions salutary to alliance cohesion. In a variation where one or more factors go wrong, an American administration would underestimate the sensitive nature of the nuclear modernization issue and prematurely elevate the SNF modernization issue to a test case of German fidelity and the alliance's ability to maintain the credibility of flexible response. American pressure catalyzes another divisive and polarizing debate in the FRG over nuclear weapons. Antinuclear sentiments are fueled and rapidly take on an anti-American and national tone.

Sensing an opportunity, the USSR pushes for a third zero option, thereby immediately putting the alliance on the defensive. Bonn faces heavy public pressure to accept the Soviet offer for a third zero option and equally strong pressure from several of its allies not to do so. To make matters worse, Moscow combines such moves with

offers for deep cuts in conventional forces, leading to rising public expectations in the West, above all in the Federal Republic, for reciprocal Western cuts. NATO is immediately put on the defensive on both the nuclear and conventional fronts, and alliance decisionmaking comes to a grinding halt.

In domestic West German politics such events would be accompanied by a steady erosion of the power base of the governing CDU/CSU-FDP coalition. The CDU/CSU continues to perform poorly in several crucial state elections and the coalition fails to win a majority in the next federal election. The result is the formation of a Red-Green coalition. Although supporting continued NATO membership, the coalition attempts to initiate far-reaching changes in alliance nuclear and conventional strategy. Supported by strong public majorities favoring cuts in nuclear forces, the new coalition calls for major revisions in existing NATO strategy, including the removal of nuclear weapons from West German soil.

Confronted with growing pressures to cut conventional forces in light of mounting economic problems and a diminished cohort of recruits because of demographic trends, Bonn calls for a restructuring of conventional forces along the lines of structurally nonoffensive defense.

Such West German moves catalyze a major strategy debate in NATO and provoke a backlash on Capitol Hill, where budget deficits have not been brought under control, and elicit a resolution calling for a partial American troop withdrawal.

While still intact, the alliance is increasingly beset with divisive conflicts over nuclear strategy, conventional forces, and how to respond to Soviet arms control initiatives. Alliance decisionmaking is driven by Soviet policy initiatives rather than any consensus in the West on NATO's longer-term vision and the best strategy for achieving it.

### **CONSTRUCTIVE DISENGAGEMENT**

This scenario envisions a substantial reordering of the military and political structures in both the East and the West. Large and asymmetrical conventional cuts would be buttressed by a move toward a minimal nuclear deterrent in East and West. The liberalization of Soviet-East European political and economic ties would be accompanied by major revisions in the military structure of the Warsaw Pact and signs of Soviet willingness to move toward bilateral security relationships with individual Eastern

European countries. In the West, such changes would be paralleled by a reduction of the American role in European defense and a restructuring of the Atlantic Alliance.

Contacts between Eastern and Western Europe would be expanded. Bonn would accept a solution to the German Question based on the ongoing existence of two states along with the political liberalization of the GDR.

The process would commence with unilateral Warsaw Pact conventional troop reductions along the lines outlined by Gorbachev in his UN speech of December 1988. Faced with mounting domestic economic woes, the Soviet leadership would table a proposal for deep asymmetrical cuts at the CFE talks in Vienna that satisfy Western criteria for conventional stability. Such cuts would be matched by far-reaching verification measures and flanked by expanded CBMs.

Supported by Gorbachev's own reform team, younger, more dynamic reform communist leaderships in East Europe would muster sufficient political skill and astuteness to implement major political and economic reforms without massive internal unrest and Soviet intervention. A more liberalized, pluralistic Eastern Europe would result in which non-communist parties assume a major role in decisionmaking. While individual East European countries have acquired a large degree of internal autonomy and have introduced far-reaching political and economic liberalization, they remain attuned to Soviet security interests. Moscow, in turn, signals its willingness to gradually replace the Warsaw Pact with bilateral security relationships with individual Eastern European countries.

The combination of such a radical reduction in Soviet forces, comprehensive verification measures, and reform in Eastern Europe would lead to a redefinition of the Soviet military threat as perceived in the West. The Western alliance would redefine its own requirements for conventional and nuclear forces. The prospect of a reduced American military presence would spur expanding Western European political and economic integration, which would be extended into the security realm. American security presence would in part be compensated for by the gradual reintegration of France into Western European security cooperation.

This in turn would be seen as sufficient to balance a reduced (and reformed) Soviet military threat. American nuclear forces would remain in Europe but would be limited to a smaller and largely symbolic number of air- and sea-based systems. There would be expanded CBMs in Europe and expanded economic and political cooperation

between an increasingly integrated and politically coherent Western Europe and an increasingly autonomous Eastern Europe in the process of domestic reform.

In terms of domestic West German politics, such a transition would be initiated by an SPD/FDP coalition under the rubric of a "second *Ostpolitik*." The further integration of the FRG into the European community, coupled with successful reform in the GDR, would lay the basis for a resolution of the German Question in the form of a loose confederation between the two German states as increased trade, travel, and commerce would defuse the issue of reunification.

### **DESTRUCTIVE DISENGAGEMENT**

In this scenario the alliance senses that Gorbachev offers the West a historical opportunity. Pushed by a mixture of American pressure to reduce the deficit and West German public pressure to reduce nuclear weapons and foreign troops, NATO embarks upon a hasty attempt at partial superpower disengagement from Central Europe. Despite a negotiated bilateral agreement on deep asymmetrical conventional cuts, Gorbachev's ability to deliver is increasingly called into question because of centrifugal tendencies within the USSR and growing opposition to Gorbachev's reform program, mostly in the military and the security apparatus. Gorbachev's own domestic reform program is undercut by economic stagnation, diminishing public support, and growing unrest among the nationalities.

Modest and largely symbolic Soviet reductions in Eastern Europe have only fueled national aspirations for greater national independence. The calculation of reform communists that they will be able to control and steer the process of reform, both coopting the opposition and maintaining a leading role in a future communist-led coalition, proves flawed. Unable to compete under more open political conditions and faced with widespread disenchantment with communist rule, local communist leaderships are compelled to abandon power to noncommunist elites. As a result, the reform process is discredited in precisely those countries where the indigenous communist parties were most pro-reform and most closely identified with Gorbachev.

The result is growing demands for the introduction of full-fledged free elections and multi-party systems along Western lines. The latter only reinforces calls for expanded liberalization in the Soviet Union itself and leads to an increased polarization of the Soviet reform debate. The arms control process comes to a halt in view of

growing instability and political ferment in the East. In the West there are increasing calls for unilateral steps to "rescue" Gorbachev, including unilateral Western steps in the realm of arms control.

Deeply divided over how to respond to rapidly changing events in the East, and itself in the midst of a far-reaching reorganization of responsibilities in conjunction with an American troop withdrawal, NATO is unable to act coherently. In the FRG, there is a growing polarization between the German left, which calls for the removal of all nuclear weapons from German soil, and a resurgent German right, which backs calls for a rearmed Western European nuclear force, including West German participation.

With the USSR's East European empire in danger of disintegrating, there is a growing radicalization of the reform debate in the USSR on both domestic and foreign policy. In the USSR, Gorbachev's calls for more radical reform measures are opposed by the security apparatus and he is toppled. A neo-Stalinist leadership dominated by Great Russians opts for retrenchment. Faced with growing unrest in Eastern Europe, it decides to either intervene in Eastern Europe with military force or tables a modern-day version of the March 1952 Stalin note offering in return for neutralization.

The Western alliance now splits over how to react to the Soviet offer. In West Germany a major and divisive debate has broken out over the merits of the Soviet offer. Among Bonn's West European allies, there is barely concealed panic that Bonn might accept. The latter only fuels national resentment in the FRG over the West's unwillingness to support what are seen as legitimate German national aspirations. The confused reaction of Bonn's key allies, including the United States, helps fuel a nationalist backlash that only exacerbates tensions in the West, offering Soviet policy new opportunities.

## VI. PROSPECTS

As the 1980s draw to a close, Bonn is confronted with perhaps the most far-reaching foreign policy decisions the country has faced since the 1950s and the initial debates over West German membership in the Western alliance. It is a time of tremendous opportunity for West German foreign policy, arising from changes currently taking place in the USSR and Eastern Europe as well as from Bonn's growing political weight in the West and in the East. It is also a time of potential risks resulting from miscalculations on the longer-term implications of the changes taking place in the East, rising public pressure for premature and hasty force reductions in the West, and growing concern among Bonn's neighbors over the ramifications of increased German influence in Central Europe.

How Bonn is going to walk the fine line between exploring the new opportunities offered by the flux in East-West relations while guarding against the risks inherent in the multiple pressures for change will hinge on two factors. The first is Bonn's ability to manage its own domestic security debate and to establish and maintain consensus in this arena. The second will be the way West German views mesh with the policies pursued by its own Western allies and the Soviet Union. Situated at the crossroads of East and West in Europe and part of a divided nation, the FRG is constantly exposed to an array of outside factors that can influence the German debate and pull it in one direction or another.

At the moment Mikhail Gorbachev is benefiting from this. Not only is there a widespread perception in the FRG that Bonn has the most to gain from Gorbachev's reforms, but the political and intellectual energy of the FRG seems practically consumed by the question of how the West should respond to the Soviet leader's initiatives. Changes in the USSR have raised hopes of a unique opportunity to move toward a more stable system of European security that would further Bonn's specific interests in the East. In these circumstances no West German chancellor can afford to be seen as not going that extra mile to explore the opportunities that Soviet reforms may offer, or as taking steps that would undermine the Soviet leader, for fear of being accused of having missed a window of opportunity that could close sometime in the mid-1990s.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Helmut Schmidt, "A Comprehensive Concept, but How?" *Die Zeit*, No. 10, March 3, 1989.

It is important for Bonn's Western allies to understand the sources of Gorbachev's appeal (as well as what they are not). Despite the Soviet leader's personal popularity, there is no corresponding increase in sympathy for the Soviet system. On the contrary, *glasnost* has further discredited the idea of "real socialism" as it has underlined just how poorly the Soviet system really works. Instead the Soviet leader's initiatives are seen as potentially demilitarizing the East-West conflict—a prospect that is particularly attractive to the unique West German reasons discussed earlier. Second, Soviet reforms are seen as offering opportunities for greater pluralism, liberalization, and democracy in Eastern Europe, again a goal that is crucial for the FRG in light of the belief that such progress is the best path to an ultimate resolution of the German Question.

These are shared Western policy goals and longstanding objectives of NATO policy. Moreover, both can be pursued within the confines of the Western alliance. If Bonn's interest in these goals is more pronounced, the difference is one of degree, not of kind. This point explains why Gorbachev's popularity has not yet and need not ever translate into any decrease in West German support for NATO. The vast majority of West Germans remain convinced that their physical security and material prosperity are linked to their membership and active participation in the political, economic, and security institutions of the Western alliance. The vast majority of West Germans know that this framework has provided them with a degree of physical security and material prosperity unprecedented in the history of the German nation. It also provides them with the basis for negotiation with the East.

The core question in the German security debate is not, therefore, the simple question of West German membership in NATO, but more subtle issues of alliance strategy and Bonn's willingness (or the lack thereof) to continue to maintain existing NATO doctrine. Bonn feels increasingly obliged to push for revisions in alliance strategy in response to changing German domestic needs and evolving trends in Eastern Europe and the USSR. This has been the issue at the heart of the SNF modernization dispute that has highlighted the differences between those who believe nuclear deterrence must be kept robust and credible so long as the outcome of the Soviet reform process remains uncertain, and those who argue that the alliance can afford to consider changes in existing nuclear force deployments, which take the alliance in the direction of a minimal or existential deterrence, that it must respond to Gorbachev, and that it cannot take the political risk of being seen as "reaming."

There are, of course, important differences in the FRG over how far NATO can or should go in reducing forces and in what direction future alliance strategy should evolve. The ruling coalition in Bonn has thus far limited its proposals to reductions amounting to a careful pruning of existing force structures; it has thus far steered away from any debate on a major overhaul of existing nuclear or conventional strategy, either because it believes there is no alternative or fears that such a debate would only further paralyze the alliance. On the left, in contrast, there are persistent calls for changes in both flexible response and forward defense resulting from the conviction that NATO's unwillingness to go beyond modest cuts in either realm has become a real impediment to progress in East-West ties.

West German unwillingness to bear the political, military, and psychological burdens of a front line state when the Soviet threat is diminishing plus the influence of Gorbachev have combined to become a potent political imperative for any German politician. As a result, Bonn is likely to continue to push for reductions in existing levels of both nuclear and conventional forces. Controversies over future nuclear strategy may be complemented by differences over conventional forces as well. The prospect of a successful arms control agreement on conventional reductions in Vienna will raise some difficult questions concerning post-CFE requirements, NATO's operational minimum in conventional forces, and the implications of deeper cuts for alliance strategy. Public expectations for deeper cuts have already been aroused, and Soviet willingness to continue down the path of further reductions could quickly confront Bonn and the rest of the alliance with a debate over the future of forward defense.<sup>2</sup>

The current coalition in Bonn has thus far shied away from an open strategy debate.<sup>3</sup> First, no one is eager to open the Pandora's Box of a strategy debate and to catalyze a discussion whose duration and outcome are uncertain. A great deal of confusion remains in Bonn and elsewhere in the alliance as to just how elastic NATO strategy is and just what type and size reductions can be absorbed before current strategy needs to be revised. Second, it is not clear what the alternative to existing strategy would be. Although concepts of "defensive defense" have gained in political currency and

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<sup>2</sup>Indeed, many of the defensive defense concepts currently discussed in West Germany call for a redefinition of what forward defense means in practical terms.

<sup>3</sup>The "comprehensive concept" issued at the recent NATO summit strongly endorses existing alliance strategy. See "A Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament," *NATO Press Communique M-1(89)20*, May 30, 1989.

credibility, they have yet to be thoroughly analyzed and tested from a military perspective. Instead of moving the alliance toward some new and safer security regime based on new notions of "common security" and "defensive defense," reductions in conventional and nuclear forces may push the alliance back into the old strategy debates of the 1950s and the 1960s.

The crucial and as yet unanswered question in the German debate is at what point domestic pressures for reductions would be placated, at what level and mix of nuclear and conventional forces a new political equilibrium could be reached, and what implications this would have for existing NATO strategy. There are no easy answers to such questions. Public opinion and public acceptance of security policy are a function of many factors including political leadership, threat perceptions, and public comprehension of security policy. After years of justifying NATO strategy and force levels primarily as a response to and a function of a Soviet threat, however, many Germans now question the need to maintain large numbers of nuclear weapons and conventional forces when Moscow is seen as willing to consider deep reductions; they are puzzled by Western reluctance to go below a certain level. The fact the NATO force postures are also a function of the requirements of NATO military strategy, terrain, and defense planning norms—factors quite independent of the military posture of the Warsaw Pact—is often lost in a country where the debate is driven primarily by political factors and where the military aspects of security are often neglected.

Against the complex backdrop sketched out here, it is perhaps understandable that West German politicians may seek to use the levers of arms control and Soviet willingness to reduce forces to shape a new domestic consensus on security policy. At some point, however, West German politicians must define a level and composition of nuclear and conventional forces that they feel corresponds to German national interests. For it is only when Germans are convinced that such forces are needed and serve their own basic national interests that they will be willing to provide support; they will not indefinitely support measures justified primarily or solely as necessary to appease the wishes of Bonn's allies or to maintain alliance cohesion.

NATO membership is not likely to become an issue so long as West Germans remain convinced that the alliance is a useful and necessary framework to maintain their security and to pursue their legitimate interests in the East. West Germans will only start to rethink such basic assumptions should the alliance framework come to be seen as

potentially harmful for the pursuit of their national aspirations and if the perception arises that Bonn's allies are seeking to hinder legitimate West German aspirations. Any moves in this direction would not only be counterproductive politically, but could also become a self-fulfilling prophecy, catalyze precisely the type of emotional debate over issues such as sovereignty among younger generation West Germans less willing to accept the self-imposed constraints of the past that the alliance can and should avoid.

The latter point is crucial for an additional reason. The prospect of a substantial diminution of the Soviet threat to Western Europe and the waning of the Cold War conflict on the continent has inevitably tossed up broader questions concerning the future of European security and of the existing bipolar system in Europe. Some authors, in the search for justification in the face of a diminishing Soviet threat, have already suggested that one of the enduring benefits of this system is that it has provided a comfortable solution to the German Question and strong guarantees against a reemergence of German power.<sup>4</sup>

Such commentary displays a remarkable lack of historical foresight, however. The European security system that emerged from the Cold War functioned as well as it did in no small part because of active German support and participation and because the Germans saw it as a vehicle for achieving not only political rehabilitation, but also for eventually their own national goals. It is an illusion to believe that Germans will continue to bear such burdens should the system be perceived as designed or justified as a means to limit and control their influence and aspirations.

Sooner or later the Western alliance must come to grips with the German Question for the simple reason that future West German attitudes toward NATO will also hinge upon how the alliance deals with this issue. There has thus far been an understandable reluctance in Bonn and elsewhere to discuss the issue for fear of its potential divisiveness. Yet changes in Eastern Europe may have already quietly placed the future of the German Question and the relationship between the two German states on the East-West agenda. In Moscow, Gorbachev has stated that he sees no alternative to the existence of two German states for the foreseeable future and that he believes in the reformability of the socialist system—in the USSR, in Eastern Europe, and in East Germany. It is not at all clear that Moscow will be willing and able to control the pace

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<sup>4</sup>Such arguments have a long history. One need only recall the remark by Lord Ismay, the first Secretary General of NATO, that the purpose of the alliance was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

and outcome of an accelerating reform process in Eastern Europe. If Moscow continues to embrace the type of *laissez faire* attitude and to adopt the type of noninterventionist stance that currently characterizes Soviet policy, the dynamics of East European politics may soon lead to the partial or total dismantling of "real socialism" as it has existed in the region for the past four decades.<sup>5</sup>

Although there are currently few signs of dramatic change visible in the GDR, East Berlin cannot remain an island of orthodox communism in a sea of change in East European politics. Should the GDR prove itself capable of meeting the challenge of reform and come up with a viable version of reform socialism that meets the aspirations of Germans in the GDR, it could defuse the German Question. For over two decades West German leaders have stated that the heart of the German Question was not reunification but political, civil, and human rights in the GDR. Should reform in the GDR move in the direction of a multiparty system and parliamentary democracy, as in Poland and Hungary, what will remain of the socialist GDR that will justify its continued existence as a second German state?

A wide spectrum of views exists in the FRG on what an ideal solution to the German Question might look like and how it could be achieved; one assumes the same is true in the GDR. Currently a strong body of opinion in the FRG advocates eventual permanent recognition of two German states provided liberalization takes place in the GDR. While willing to consider a variety of possible resolutions to the German Question, no West German leader can permanently write off reunification as an issue so long as Germans in the GDR have not explicitly made it clear that they see their right to self-determination realized in a second German state.

At the same time, Bonn must also clarify its goals and aspirations and how it plans to pursue them. When pressed to define such goals, many West Germans fall back upon the comfortable argument that it is impossible to give a concrete answer in light of the evident uncertainties. Such a stance is no longer adequate. The willingness of Bonn's neighbors in the West and in the East to proceed down the path of arms control in Central Europe is understandably linked to their expectations, hopes, and fears as to what type of Europe and what type of Germany is likely to emerge at the end of this process. Much of the residual distrust regarding West German policy is linked to concern that Bonn is

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<sup>5</sup>Zbigniew Brzezinski has made the most forceful argument that communism is not reformable and that we are approaching the first phase of a post-communist period. See *The Grand Failure*, Charles Scribner, New York, 1989.

pursuing some hidden agenda and that its call for revisions in Western strategy or policy are driven by unspoken but real national ambitions.

Such grand issues of the future political architecture of Germany and Europe may seem somewhat remote to a Western policymaker trying to decipher future West German attitudes toward NATO over the next five years. The current West German debate over the future of the alliance can be understood only against the backdrop of an emerging strategy debate and a growing sense that larger issues of the future political architecture of Europe have been placed on the East-West agenda as a result of changes currently taking place in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

This helps clarify much of the divide that currently seems to separate Bonn from several of its other Western allies. The United States has embraced a strategy that is aimed at stabilizing the current military balance and preserving the political and military structures and doctrines upon which Western policy has previously been based. Faced with growing domestic pressures for reductions in the existing force levels and yearnings for a more autonomous foreign policy role, and fascinated by the scope and speed of change in Eastern Europe, Bonn has warmly embraced the opportunities for change arising from the current flux in East-West relations and has sought to use its growing influence to bend alliance strategy to better fit its own interests and needs. The FRG, too, remains officially committed to current NATO strategy, but it is increasingly seen as pulling the alliance down the path toward more far-reaching and ambitious changes in existing force levels and postures, changes that could have wide ranging political repercussions in both halves of Europe.

Western policymakers must be sensitive to this unique German situation and understand the reasons for it. At the same time, the alliance cannot simply sit back and wait for the Germans to sort out a tangled web of issues concerning their own national interests, questions of German identity, and how this relates to Western strategy. The interests of all members of the alliance are at stake. Changes in existing force postures and even alliance strategy are, of course, possible, but they would entail important political and military tradeoffs that touch upon the national interests of many NATO nations. Moreover, such questions are not purely military in nature. While expressed in terms of military strategy, the heart of the matter is the distribution of risk, power, and dependence—the issues of risk-sharing that have formed the core of alliance unity over the years.

Finally, the potential influence of Bonn's Western allies is enormous and certainly exceeds that of Gorbachev. The final outcome of the West German security debate will not only be a function of domestic trends; equally important will be the fashion in which Bonn's allies work to influence and steer the outcome of this debate. Indeed, in light of the growing uncertainties of domestic German politics, and the prospect of unstable coalitions in the future, Bonn's ability to articulate a clear and coherent foreign and security policy course may very well be hampered, thereby making it more dependent than ever on the actions and support of its allies.

This is particularly true in the case of the United States, which certainly has the greatest influence of any country, East or West, on West German thinking. At the moment, much of the criticism of American policy in West Germany results from the public perception that the United States is preoccupied with the nuts and bolts of military issues at a time when Gorbachev is proposing to talk about the future political architecture of Europe. In the United States, there is growing concern over the geopolitical maturity of the FRG and what is seen as a growing unwillingness to confront difficult issues and tradeoffs between political and military strategy.

The lion's share of current differences between Washington and Bonn lie in the realm of security policy. They result from differences in size, geography, and history. Such differences have always existed; in the past they have been successfully managed with national differences enveloped in the compromises implicit and explicit in past NATO policy. The fact that such differences have again surfaced and become the subject of both elite and public controversy is the result of the coincidence of two different trends. The first is the maturation of the Federal Republic as a medium-sized and German power in Europe and that of a new generation of German leaders reexamining the terms of past security arrangements. The second is the onset of a more flexible Soviet leadership led by Mikhail Gorbachev, which has confronted the alliance with the need to respond to the Soviet leader's initiatives and to articulate its own long-term vision for the future of Europe.

Such signs of German assertiveness are often misinterpreted in the West, including the United States, as evidence of a new "go it alone attitude" by Bonn in security matters or signs of some budding rapprochement with the East at the expense of the West. The security dilemmas facing Bonn, however, have at best been attenuated, not resolved, by the changes that have thus far taken place in the East and in Soviet

policy. As a result, Bonn still faces the same essential security needs and the same need to maintain a balance in its overall foreign policy—a balance that requires its close cooperation with and integration in a Western security alliance led by the United States.

These basic geopolitical realities are unlikely to change in the next five years. Will the alliance be able to establish and preserve a consensus on NATO's future strategy that simultaneously fulfills changing West German political requirements, satisfies the minimal military requirements of NATO strategy, and maintains fair and adequate risk-sharing agreements for all parties? At the moment, the West German debate seems concentrated on the risks and burdens facing the Federal Republic—risks that are portrayed as too high or unacceptable—to the detriment of the security benefits that Bonn harvests. The result has been pressures for Bonn to shed or reduce those risks or to shift them to the shoulders of other NATO nations.

Any overt attempt by Bonn to unilaterally shift the balance of risks inherent in existing NATO military strategy will meet with strong skepticism elsewhere in the alliance, above all those countries who would be forced to bear a larger share of the risk. While the merits and need for SNF modernization can surely be debated, West German opposition has generated suspicions that Bonn may be seeking to revise NATO nuclear strategy incrementally and through "the back door," forcing greater reliance on longer-range systems, including U.S. strategic forces, that shift the burden of nuclear risk away from the FRG and toward the United States. Similarly, several aspects central to many of the defensive defense concepts can also be interpreted as increasing the burden placed upon Bonn's allies, including Washington.<sup>6</sup>

If Bonn and Washington are successful in working out a consensus on security policy, particularly the question of the future evolution of NATO military strategy, a more basic set of interests and outlook will continue to forge a special relationship between Washington and Bonn. Washington has traditionally been and is likely to remain Bonn's ally that is most understanding of special West German concerns, the least distrustful of German power, and the most supportive of German national aspirations. In part, this is the luxury of a continental North American superpower. It is also the result of the trust that has accumulated over four decades of close political and

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<sup>6</sup>The concern is that any deep cuts in conventional forces would make the alliance even more dependent upon mobilization and U.S. reserves from North America arriving in a timely fashion in Europe, thereby putting even greater pressure on alliance and American decisionmakers to mobilize early during a crisis situation.

military cooperation. All the changes and often conflicting pressures in American-West German relations notwithstanding, the United States is the Western ally that has traditionally been most supportive of long-term West German goals, and West Germany will continue to look to Washington for leadership and support even as it seeks to carve out a more assertive and autonomous foreign policy role in the confines of the Western alliance.

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